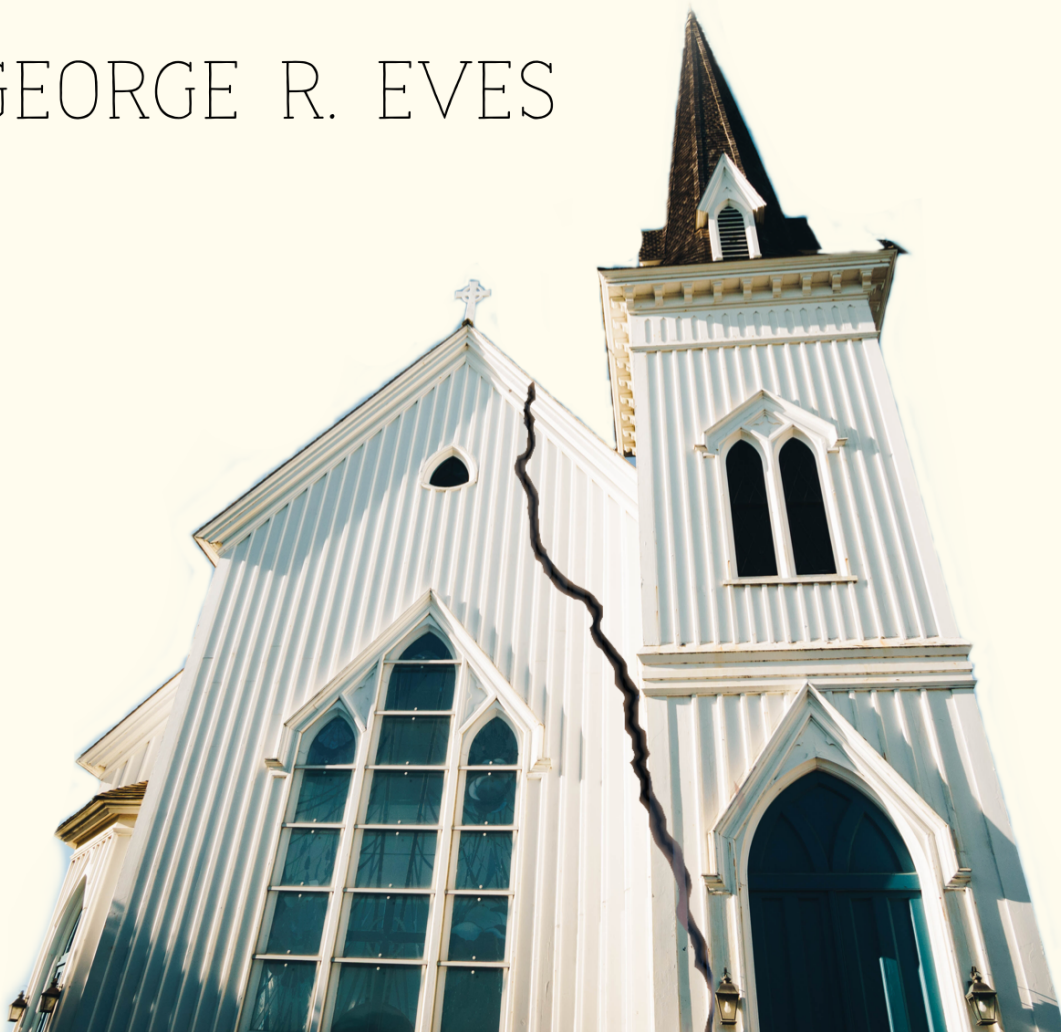


Two
Religions ONE
CHURCH

GEORGE R. EVES



TWO RELIGIONS/ ONE CHURCH

CRISIS, DIVISION, AND DESTINY IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

(Newly Revised in the Light of General Synod 2019)

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INTRODUCTION

This is what the Lord Almighty says:

*“Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you;
they fill you with false hopes.
They speak visions from their own minds,
not from the mouth of the Lord.*

Jeremiah 23:16

In the first edition of this book, now over twenty years old, I asked those readers who disagreed with what I said to enter into dialogue, to put forward counter-arguments, or present a more accurate picture of what was taking place in our Church. To my knowledge this was never done and in the meantime the Church has continued to drift apart, two more Canadian solitudes. I have begun to think we even have two different languages in the Church as well!

I had many readers let me know that they strongly agreed with me and found the book very helpful. Although this was gratifying on one level, on another it was discouraging. For the fact that I heard about others who had the opposite reaction only confirmed my basic thesis that the Anglican Church of Canada is so deeply divided that the division could be characterized as that between two different religions. Two reactions: One book, (as my friend Reed Fleming might put it, yet again)!

In that book I also claimed that I was not a prophet or the son of a prophet. I was thinking at the time of the inspired ability of a prophet to predict the future and some have suggested that, once again, I was wrong. At least about me not being a prophet. I suppose my one big prediction was that the ACC would come to grief over the issue of homosexuality and that is unfortunately

proving to be the case. Focus is now firmly fixed on General Synod this coming July in Vancouver and its second vote on an amendment to the Marriage Canon permitting same-sex marriage.

However, a prophet's role is not limited to, or even mostly about, prediction. His or her main role is to obey the call of God and, speaking uncomfortable truth, confront a situation that, if not rectified, will lead to disaster for God's wayward people.

In this book I speak terrible and hard truths, as directly and as clearly as I can. I have tried to speak the truth in love and not in anger, fear, or bitterness but I realize that speaking as directly as I have can make it seem otherwise. I hope that none will take offence, but if you do, I also hope you will try to put that offence aside for the sake of our common future and consider carefully and prayerfully what I have to say. If you find my reasoning incomprehensible and wildly off base, please consider the possibility that your reaction is, at least in part, evidence of the depth of the problem we face. Part of my purpose in speaking in this way is indeed to shock us out of our dangerous complacencies. Consider it a crude attempt at an "intervention" along the lines of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (2:4).

I did not want to write this book, just like I did not want to write the first edition. When certain members of my family "encouraged" me to do so, I resisted mightily because I felt there was really nothing I could say or do that would truly make any difference. It seemed to me that after General Synod 2016 passed the first vote on the amendment the die was cast and there was little or no hope that our Church would survive intact. But, as usual, I gave in.

As I began to write, a strange thing began to happen: I started to see a glimmer of hope, like Elijah's small cloud on the horizon. I began to see a possible (though not probable, and certainly not easy!) way to keep the Church together with the two religions more or less peacefully intact and I felt duty bound to try to express this hope as best I could.

HERE IS MY THESIS:

The Anglican Church of Canada was organized in the late nineteenth century with the overt intention of remaining in doctrinal continuity with the historical Christian faith and in communion with the Church of England from which it sprang. Over the last century many in the Church (especially in its leadership) adopted theological “liberalism” in whole or in part. At the end of the day, liberalism leads its adherents to profess a different religion than that of classical catholic Christianity. As a result, the Church became a rather uneasy mixture of the two religions. Until recently, the resulting division has remained a largely behind-the-scenes development but it has been becoming more and more obvious. General Synod 2019 will make a decision on a proposed change to the Marriage Canon that would allow for the marriage of persons of the same sex. Conservative Anglicans in their opposition to this doctrinal innovation, and liberal Anglicans in their support of it, have their fundamental theological convictions on the line in this debate. Whichever way the vote goes there will be more open conflict and division. People do not arrive at or change their basic theological convictions as a result of a majority vote at General Synods. Eventually this conflict and division will lead to a diminished Church that is radically different than it is today but shaped by forces already at work. These forces will either work their destructive way unhindered or, just possibly, motivate structural changes that will enable both religions to co-exist on their own terms in the same institution and perhaps even pave the way to some kind of long-term and fruitful relationship.

Am I a prophet who fills people with false visions and vain hopes as Jeremiah puts it in the quotation above?

That is not for me to decide. I simply cannot remain silent in the light of what I see now and what I see coming. I sincerely hope that I convince no one of anything but the truth. Let your heart and mind prayerfully consider whether or not this is what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

May God have mercy on us all.

George R. Eves

February 2019

P.S. If you have read the first edition of this book or are already convinced that two religions underlie the divisions in the ACC, then you have my permission to go directly to Chapter Seven for its discussion of General Synod 2019 and its likely outcomes. Chapters One to Six present an updated and revised explanation of how we got to this point. Chapter Seven begins with a summary of the previous chapters to refresh your memory and confirm your prejudices.

CHAPTER ONE

Fears and Fantasies

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1

At first glance many Anglicans will automatically resist my thesis. Some will even be shocked and angered. They will see in this work an attack upon the Anglican Church and its leaders. Some will view what I have to say as an attempt to resurrect the “old” divisions that have plagued our Church and which thankfully have fallen into irrelevance in recent years. Still others will sense that I am only making a bad situation worse by airing these things in public.

While these reactions are certainly understandable, I believe they are unfounded and based upon certain misunderstandings as to the nature of Anglicanism. While I naturally think that the main argument of the book will serve to dispel these “fears and fantasies”, they also need to be addressed directly at this point in an attempt to clear some of the debris from the path for those who might hesitate to proceed further.

First of all, there will be some, especially perhaps among our current leaders, who will feel that what I have to say will only be rubbing salt in the wounds that divide us. Why can’t we just agree to disagree and tolerate one another’s differences as members of the same family? Surely this is the Christian thing to do. While this is an attractive point of view for a number of reasons, it begs the question of truth by assuming that all points of view have a legitimate place on the Anglican spectrum. I hope to show, in fact, why it is partly because of this attitude that we have ended up

in crisis. For those of us who insist that there is a right and a wrong such calls for undefined tolerance can only be taken as a way of silencing our voice right from the start.

Secondly, it is often said in Anglican contexts “Thank goodness the divisions that marked our past are now behind us”. Am I not then merely returning to the “bad old days” by wanting to address the whole question of “division” once again? Surely this would be counter-productive at this stage in the Church’s life. Strangely enough, I am in full-hearted accord with the sentiment! I have no desire whatever to conjure up our old “party spirits” which had us securely fixed in our various camps: “low-church/evangelical”, “high-church/anglo-catholic” and “broad-church/moderate”. These no longer matter in the way they did in the past. The old battles that were fought over what now appear to be trifling matters (e.g. the wearing of stoles or the use of mitres) have been largely relegated to the ash heap of history. This, indeed, is cause for rejoicing.

My point is that the current division in our denomination is of a wholly different order. It makes our previous differences look like a children’s quarrel. Not only is our unity threatened but also our very existence. Whereas we used to be divided on what most saw as secondary matters, today we are divided on core issues. I hope to show that this is indeed the case and how it has come about. Perhaps the serious nature of these allegations will encourage concerned Anglicans to read on.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there are many Anglicans who are extremely uncomfortable with any suggestion that officials who hold legitimate leadership positions in their Church could seriously be charged with coming to believe in a different “religion” than that of traditional/orthodox Christianity. Have they not been chosen by the Church? Are not most of them ordained? Are not some of them bishops? Surely it is vain to oppose this leadership. After all it *is* the leadership. Does not the Holy Spirit direct the whole process? Should we not stop our ears to any voices which suggest otherwise? If we dare suggest that significant segments of the leadership have fallen away from the truth, even as a theoretical possibility, our whole understanding of authority in the church is called into question.

While such opinions are understandable they stand in opposition to both our history and to good theology. Our church was founded in the first half of the sixteenth century during the time of the Reformation. The latter was a movement which was partly a protest against a church hierarchy that had lost its way and become corrupt in the extreme. A widespread call to return to a more biblical theology went unheeded by the authorized leadership of the church and the result was a tragic but probably inevitable (in the circumstances) open division in the church. As a result, the Reformers, English and otherwise, were forced to re-examine the nature of church authority.

The English reformers, in their summary of the official doctrinal positions of Anglicanism known as the thirty-Nine Articles (BCP pp. 698-714), joined with their contemporaries in reviving an ancient principle about authority. Article XXI, “Of the Authority of General Councils” holds that when such Councils are gathered together,

(forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) *they may err, and sometimes have erred in things pertaining unto God.* Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority *unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.* (BCP, p. 706; my italics)

According to our history and to our founding theology as Anglicans, the final test of what we are to believe and how we are to live is to hold the matter up to the Scriptures, not the pronouncements of individual leaders or those even of the whole church. Our tradition speaks very clearly to this issue. As recently as the Lambeth Conference of 1968, the assembled bishops of our worldwide Communion once again affirmed that the church is under Scripture and not the other way around.

Thus, it is part of our Anglican heritage to maintain proper regard for our church leaders within an overriding commitment to Scriptural truth. This last idea will be explored more fully below,

but for the present purpose it is sufficient to stress that it is authentically Anglican to assume that even the great councils of the church, traditionally regarded as the most authoritative of church pronouncements, can err. From this perspective it is both wrong and dangerous to place church leaders beyond criticism. This is the tradition out of which I wish to speak.

A deeper theological justification for proceeding as I have lies in the Scripture itself. Here one discovers the idea of a “faithful remnant” deeply rooted in the self-understanding of the Jewish people. Again and again in the history of Israel the official leadership of the nation, often a king, not only fell into occasional sin but was altogether evil. Just because they were in legitimate succession did not place them or their policies automatically in the will of God. In fact, it is clear that on many occasions they were leading the people into apostasy and idol worship. The prophets were sent to hold the leaders to account for straying from the revealed Word of God, especially as spelled out in the Law of Moses. In the meantime, it was acknowledged that not all of Israel had gone astray and there remained a smaller group within nation known as the “remnant” which continued to serve God in spite of the official leadership. It was sometimes this stubborn perseverance which stayed the judgment of God upon the whole of the nation.

A similar situation is portrayed in the New Testament, especially in reference to our Lord’s relationship with the official religious leadership of his day. It doesn’t take much reading of the Gospels to perceive that Jesus himself regarded those in power as legitimate and deserving of respect but bereft of the Spirit. In fact, they often stood against the purposes of God. Ultimately, they had Jesus put to death, so vehement was their opposition. They thought that they were above the rabble who supported Jesus. After all, they were the rulers of the Temple and the doctors of the Law! (John 7:49) They had it so wrong that they thought Jesus must have been possessed by the chief of the demons. (Matthew 12:24)

This conflict continued through the life of the early church which eventually had to distinguish itself from Judaism, in part because of such inflexibility. And even within the leadership of the early church, Peter, the one chosen by our Lord himself, had to be opposed on the issue of

circumcision for Gentile believers. It was only after Paul stood up to him at Antioch that Peter came fully around to the truth. (Galatians 2:11ff.)

The Bible therefore gives us ample warning against assuming that the official leadership of the people of God is always in the right. Indeed, it almost seems at times that we should be *expecting* the leadership to go astray! As a result, we should be on our guard both to support and encourage them when we can and also to confront them when necessary. This is not an easy thing to do because of the inherent complexities in the situation. However, it is a necessary thing, not only in our generation but in every generation.

Conclusion: A Critical Path

There are, therefore, a number of good reasons to suggest that the path I have chosen is not to be avoided after all. There is much in our tradition that would encourage our taking it, even though doing so may be difficult. While it may not be necessary in ordinary times, it is positively essential in times of crisis. For these reasons, then, I hope that I will be accorded the privilege both to speak and to be heard. I hardly expect everyone to agree with me! As well, I speak knowing that I, too, am a flawed human being constantly in need of the grace of God.

CHAPTER TWO

Crisis? What Crisis?

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known that on this day what would bring you peace- but now it is hidden from your eyes."

Luke 19:41-42

As I have already declared, a major reason for my speaking out at this time is my conviction that the Anglican Church of Canada is in a state of profound crisis. Unless proper action is taken there is a real danger that this once great institution, still rich with tradition and potential, will come to serious grief. This will result in significant loss not only to its members, but also to the entire Christian community in Canada. I will now explore the symptoms of this crisis as well as its effects upon the various segments of the church. This will establish its reality in all our minds and is the necessary first step toward recovery. In the course of this examination certain patterns will emerge, the most significant of which is the increasing fragmentation of the church along a hundred different lines.

Symptom 1: The Membership Blues

No Church can exist without members. When membership is rising there is inevitably a sense of institutional well-being. When it is falling the opposite is true. Much of the sense of crisis in the ACC can be traced to this one hard truth: membership has been dropping steadily since the high point reached long ago in the early 1960s.

In 1961 there were 1,358,000 persons on the rolls and by 1994 this figure had been cut almost in half to 781,000. By 2007, the last year for which published statistics are available, the number

was 545,957. This precipitous 60% drop in absolute numbers is bad enough but it took place while Canada's general population was growing. Thus, Anglicans went from being 7% of the population to only 1.7%. Admittedly these numbers are only a very rough guide to one's "place" in society, but they have had a significant negative impact on the Anglican self-image. They also mask an even harder truth well known to anyone who is familiar with the maintaining of parish rolls: of those officially listed as "members", only a small percentage of them are actually attend and give.

There is every reason to expect that this downward membership trend is merely the lull before the storm. This is the inescapable conclusion to any careful consideration of the particular composition of the current membership and how it came into being. *For a closer look soon reveals the startling truth that the contemporary church is largely comprised of elderly women.* One has only to attend almost any Anglican service in any Anglican parish in order to verify this reality. And thank God for them!

Since the 1960s there has indeed been a mass exodus. We might call this the first shoe to drop, consisting mostly of younger people, while their elders, especially their mothers, have tended to remain faithful. This trend is borne out by the statistics. While the membership as a whole declined by "only" 50% from 1961 to 1994, baptisms fell 60% and Sunday School attendance and confirmations fell a whopping 80%. Significantly, burials have only decreased by 15%. These trends have ensured that the Anglican population still has a hugely disproportionate number of older females. These women, largely responsible for parish vitality since the 1960s and who make up a great percentage of its membership, are going to pass away in the next few years. That is the other shoe. Their natural replacements, their children and grandchildren, have largely vanished from the pew. Unless things change considerably, greater membership decline lies ahead. There is a real generation gap and the church is in serious danger of falling into it very soon.

Once all of the leftovers from the boom years of the 1960s have died, the Church will finally bottom out at its natural sustainable level in contemporary society. It is so bad that a recent

article in the Globe and Mail strongly suggested that the ACC was even facing the threat of extinction¹. Although this is unlikely, the continuing decline of the membership is naturally sending tremors of angst throughout the denomination. It has enormous implications for every aspect of its life. Significant cutbacks have already begun to take place in every diocese both in the number of parishes and the clergy who serve them. This is not a pleasant time for the laity or for the clergy.

The exodus from the ACC has been accelerated by many members who have left for other denominations because they no longer identified with its liberal theological drift. I encountered this in the early '80's when I spoke to a key leader in the parish who had departed for another denomination just before I arrived as rector. The bishops had recently declared that non-practicing homosexuals would not be barred from ordination and it was this that sent him packing. Nothing I could say would convince him that the Anglican Church was not in peril for its very soul. At that time the homosexual issue was just a small cloud on the horizon, but he saw it as the final nail in the Anglican coffin. And so he, like many before and since, walked away from the church of his birth and which he had served so faithfully.

In fact, there have been so many disaffected Anglicans willing to leave that in 2005 a group of them formed what would become the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC). A number of parishes, including several large and active ones, have left the ACC for ANiC. As of this writing six of their nine bishops are retired bishops from the ACC. In 2009 it became a diocese in a new denomination, the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) which is under the ecclesiastical oversight of the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America. At present, the Anglican Church of North America is trying to gain admittance into and obtaining official recognition from the Anglican Communion.

ANiC now reports an average Sunday attendance of 4800, which is larger than at least thirteen of the dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada. This is a significant number all by itself but

¹ Michael Valpy, February 9, 2010

when one considers the fact that it includes a high percentage of active, enthusiastic and giving Christians that have been lost to the ACC, the impact is all the greater. Besides this, ANiC provides a place to go for disaffected Anglicans who want to remain Anglicans, place that they did not have before. In other words it applies yet more grease to the slide.

Symptom 2: Of Decayed Evangelism

Given the twin realities of serious past and future membership decline it would be natural to assume that the Anglican Church of Canada would be mobilizing all its energies toward the reversal of the situation. This is not happening.

While it is true that some efforts have been made in the field of “membership development”, they have met with only modest success. Oddly, some parishes have resisted even the mildest of suggestions that would make them more attractive and inviting to outsiders. Even installing such things as more readable signs out front or user-friendly coat rooms seems to be too much. Whatever one thinks of such efforts, even where employed they certainly do not seem to have made any significant impact on the numbers.

What is needed are *new* members, people who have never been attenders. They are needed in significant numbers if the church is to avoid continuing the kind of drastic and painful downsizing that is already underway (see Symptom 1). For churches there are only a few possible sources of new members.

Traditionally it is the children of current members who step into the traces and take up the slack. As we have already seen, however, it is precisely the child-bearing age group that has already left or dropped out, taking their children with them. Many rectors have observed the valiant efforts of grandparents to bring their grandchildren to Church, but again this seems not to have stopped the receding tide. The advancing age of most Anglicans also precludes any serious expectation of a baby boom in the foreseeable future!

Another possibility is that the church might acquire new members because of defections from other denominations. While it is true that the ACC has enjoyed modest success from this source, especially in reference to its clergy, there is nothing to suggest that it will bring significant number through the doors. The significant flow, as we have experienced it, is in exactly the opposite direction: people leaving for other denominations.

Next, we might remember that in the past Anglicans have benefited from the waves of new immigrants that have come to Canada. Much of New Brunswick, where I live, was originally settled by Loyalists escaping the American Revolution. Naturally they brought their Church of England faith with them. However, given the current patterns of immigration, this is an unlikely possibility in our time. Perhaps things will change and there will be a mass influx of, say, Nigerians. To count on this for our salvation as a Church, however, would surely signal the depth of our desperation.

Finally, it is possible that modern secularized people will recognize and appreciate the efforts of the leadership of the ACC to appear more in tune with the spirit of the age. Their relative silence on specifically spiritual matters while taking left/liberal stands on a number of public issues will no doubt attract some. Most Anglican parishes are genuine multigenerational communities and one would think that this would prove meaningful to many in a fragmented age. But it is proving difficult to get them through the doors and into the pews in significant numbers.

There remains but one possible way of truly increasing Church membership – evangelism. By this I mean, for purposes of this discussion, the changing of nominal Christians or unbelievers into fully committed and attending believers. Here, at least, there is serious potential! There are millions of unchurched Canadians and, according to Statistics Canada, even hundreds of thousands who still identify themselves as Anglicans but who are not active members of the church.

Not only is this true but it is generally acknowledged that there is a renewed interest in spiritual matters among Canadians. There seems to be an increasing dissatisfaction with the answers offered by the secular world's shallow but increasingly shrill ideologies that come and go. Science and technology still offer no answers to the deeper questions of life.

But all this does not mean that the general public is about to show up at our fonts in droves! All denominations are facing similar issues in a society that views Christianity from a "been there, done that" perspective, not to mention that our all too real moral failures have naturally left a sour taste in the mouth of many. It is going to be an uphill slog to learn effective means of presenting the Gospel to such a crowd.

However, the Christian church has done it all before. The Early Church went from 120 to 3000 on one day and never looked back. Without a strong emphasis on the conversion of "pagans" to the faith, the history of Western civilization would have been considerably different. England itself would have remained a pagan nation and there never would have been a Church of England. While at times, as in the Crusades, this aspect of the mission of the Church was often misdirected, at times neglected, and usually entwined with cultural imperialism, it has nevertheless remained a vital characteristic of the faith. In the last century, with the expansion of the Empire there was a renewed emphasis on the evangelism of the newly encountered peoples of North America and elsewhere. The direct result of this effort is that the Anglican Church of Canada today has a very strong indigenous component. To evangelize is a significant part of our history, even if mistakes were made along the way.

It is also part of our present, at least in other parts of the Anglican communion. In Kenya and in Chile, in Singapore and in Tegucigalpa, Anglicans are evangelizing with enthusiasm and with success, sometimes spectacular success. When the bishops of the Communion met at Lambeth in 1988 they affirmed evangelism as "the primary task" of the Church and committed the whole communion to a Decade of Evangelism in the 1990's.

With all of this in mind it would seem logical to expect that the Anglican Church of Canada would have long ago mobilized a great effort directed at the evangelization of Canadian society. Sadly, this is not the case. There have been a few initiatives at the National level, mostly aimed at looking at ways to facilitate local evangelism. General Synod has taken a bit of its time to look at and discuss a video produced in association with the visit to Canada of the present Archbishop of Canterbury. It was entitled, prophetically for the ACC, "One Generation from Extinction". But within the overall agenda of General Synod, which dedicated hours and hours to the changing of Church structures, evangelism found itself at the back of the bus.

It is hard to escape the impression that, as a whole, the Church shows but a token interest in evangelism. Undoubtedly there is more talk than action. At least it was on the agenda of General Synod and did get discussed to some degree. But nothing was done to make it a priority. No great sums of money were dedicated to the task. It is difficult to see how the efforts of the National leadership will result in much evangelism actually being done.

It is worth noting that, to the surprise of some of my readers, perhaps, for generations the ACC had an organization within it dedicated to the practice of evangelism. I am referring to the Church Army which got its start in Canada toward the beginning of the twentieth century. It was never large but over the years its lay "Captains" worked in many parishes to extend the kingdom locally. In fact, Larry Robertson, bishop of Yukon, David Parsons, bishop of the Arctic, and David Edwards, bishop of Fredericton, were all CA evangelists earlier in their ministries. Unfortunately, the CA came to feel more and more unwelcome by the Anglican establishment. For this and other reasons CA felt it was called to change its name to Threshold Ministries and become a non-denominational organization.

However, that is not to say that there are no Anglicans at all engaged on this front. In 1991 The Institute of Evangelism was established at Wycliffe College in Toronto. Wycliffe is a theological college independent of diocesan structures and has its roots and ethos in the evangelical tradition of the Anglican Church. The Institute was established to train Wycliffe students in evangelism and

provide resources for the same to the wider church and is still going strong. It has not reached its stated goal of helping every parish to be an evangelizing community, but it has made considerable progress in that direction, at least for those relative few who are interested. Perhaps it is too early to say if these efforts will do much to reverse the overall trend.

As well, many parishes have participated in evangelism programs such as The Alpha Course. Oddly enough this program originated at Holy Trinity, Brompton, in the Church of England and has been used in many different denominations and contexts with some success. Now running in 100 countries in 100 languages, over 24 million people have taken the course, and many have come to faith. It is a short course in which people are invited into conversation about faith in Jesus Christ. A number of Canadian Anglican churches have found it helpful, but many struggle to make it a regular feature of their outreach.

Finally, in the Diocese of Fredericton, at least, consistent efforts have been made by the bishop (David Edwards) to stimulate his clergy to change from a maintenance mode to a mission mode. While this is a welcome beginning, most of clergy came into ministry not as evangelists but as chaplains. This was, and to some degree remains, our basic outlook and it is very difficult to change. But first of all, we have to change our minds and attitudes and this is starting to happen given the pressures we are all facing. The next step is to channel our new understandings and priorities into practical action at the parish level. No doubt other dioceses are making similar efforts but it is still too soon to predict if they will bear fruit. But you have to plant the seed first! Will it take root, grow and flourish? Only time will tell, and we may be running short of time.

The bottom line is that we are left with a National Church that apparently has little or no prospect of reversing the membership loss that has already taken place or that will take place in the next few years. The usual means of increasing membership are either out of reach or, in the case of evangelism, virtually ignored by the establishment. For a number of reasons, then, the Anglican Church of Canada, in a time of great pressure to find a way to add new members, it is unable or unwilling to evangelize. Even evangelical Anglicans are failing at evangelism. There appears to

be no way of avoiding further drastic membership reduction and the trauma that will accompany it. This is surely an institution in serious crisis.

Symptom 3: The Falling Dollar

When parishioners by the thousands left the Anglican Church they naturally took their wallets with them! This would have had a crippling effect except for two additional developments. Those Anglicans who remained have done an exceptional job of reaching deeper into their pockets to support the Church. Although most parishioners are still a long way from tithing (giving the biblical 1/10 of their income) they are no longer merely token givers. This has enabled the Church not only to survive but to increase its spending considerably in spite of membership losses. There has also been an increasing dependence upon endowments left to the Church by the faithful departed: these, at least, *have* left their wallets behind! Without these gifts from the past many parishes would not be able to come close to balancing their budgets.

In spite of these developments, however, there is growing evidence that the denomination is settling into a serious financial crisis. Expenses have risen faster than inflation as clergy salaries and benefits, the major segment of parish budgets, have been raised to the level of other professionals, maintenance of older buildings has become an ever-increasing burden, and Church bureaucracy, until very recently, has become something of a growth industry.

These factors, among others, combined with the continuing decline in membership (soon to speed up considerably), would suggest that current giving is very close to being "maxed out", if not in actually dropping. The modest response to recent appeals points in this same direction. Efforts are being doubled to convince an increasingly aging membership to leave its money to the Church in their wills. It does not stop there. The latest program involves persuading members to purchase life insurance which names the Church as both owner and beneficiary. The Communion of Saints will apparently require a very long offertory hymn! At the same time, because Anglicans do not yet approach the tithe in their giving (as Christians in some other

denominations do), many Church officials remain convinced that the needed money "is still out there" in people's pockets. The problem is that few appear to be excited about giving it to the Church.

If this has created enormous stress at the parish level, the problem is even worse at the National and Diocesan levels. This is largely because of the way in which these levels of Church administration are funded. Individual Anglicans do not support these bureaucracies directly like citizens who send their taxes directly to the federal and provincial governments. Instead, they give only toward the budget of their own parish. The latter is then expected to forward part of its budgeted income to its own diocese as its "fair share" of diocesan expenses. The amount asked of each parish is determined by an agreed-upon formula.

In turn, the dioceses include the National Church as part of their budgets. Almost all of the National Church income comes from the dioceses. As a result of this system most parishioners are much more aware of the fact that the parish supports the diocese than they are of the fact that the diocese forwards a significant proportion of that support to the National Church. For example, about 1/10 of the budget of the Diocese of Fredericton is forwarded on to Toronto and about ½ of that total budget is contributed by the parishes.

While such a system worked reasonably well in good times when parishes were able to pay their own expenses and still send significant "fair shares" to the diocese, it has proven very vulnerable when local expenses began to eat up more and more of parish budgets. The first thing to be cut is often the diocesan "fair share" because it is usually not seen as a necessary expense (as compared with the rector's stipend or the oil for the furnace). It is often a significant proportion of the parish budget and cutting it does not affect local program. Thus diocesan income takes a direct hit and it, in turn, finds its National apportionment an attractive item to cut for exactly the same reasons. In this way the National Church suffers disproportionately when financial times take a turn for the worse.

An editorial in the February 1996 Anglican Journal referred to this as the "domino effect". While indications are that parish income is at least holding its own if not increasing, diocesan income from the parishes is indeed falling. In turn dioceses are cutting the amounts they send on to the National level. The 1996 national apportionment budget was down almost \$600,000 from the previous year. In spite of official denials to the contrary, there is little doubt that the recent "re-structuring" (down-sizing) of General Synod was at least in part forced on the institution because of this declining revenue. Bureaucracies, including church bureaucracies, have an innate drive to expand and contract only when compelled by outside forces. Given the likelihood of actual cuts in parish income (due to the anticipated attendance drop), we can expect the problem at the Diocesan and National levels to get a lot worse before it gets better, if it ever does. This has cast a very real pall over the Church's sense of well-being.

These trends are also part of the underlying and disturbing pattern of fragmentation that is taking place in the Anglican Church of Canada. There seems to be a definite rise in parochialism, as parishes become more focused on their own immediate needs and less on the needs of the wider Anglican community. The ties that bind the parishes to each other, to the diocese and to the National Church, seem to be much weaker than they have been in the past.

One often hears bishops referring to the diocese as the "basic unit of the church" but this is not a reality for most Anglicans. For them the basic unit is the parish. Perhaps we are evolving into congregationalists! While this may be too radical a conclusion, it does underline the sense in which our episcopal system of church government is under siege. Parishes are more interested in doing their own thing and this is part of what I mean by "fragmentation". The centre may not hold.

Symptom 4: Indecent Disorder

When a society or an institution is in trouble it invariably descends into chaos. While it may be going too far to claim that the Anglican Church of Canada is in chaos, there are enough indications

of serious disorder to suggest that it is not far from that state. This disorder, which I have called fragmentation, is all more vivid when seen against the backdrop of Anglicanism's famous passion that "all things might be done decently and in order" (I Corinthians 14:40, KIV). In what follows I will outline the main areas in which "indecent disorder" has taken hold. Each one is disturbing enough on its own but taken together the picture is truly alarming.

There is no question that liturgy is at the centre of Anglican life and identity. Up until quite recently it was the great pride of the Church that wherever you went in the worldwide Anglican Communion the worship in any parish church would be from virtually the same Book of Common Prayer. Canadians would return home from a trip to Australia and relate this phenomenon with warm amazement. Here they were on the other side of the world, able to worship with their accustomed familiarity. It made them feel at home and truly a part of a spiritual family that transcended geographic and political boundaries.

Most of this came about through the extension of the British Empire. Wherever it went the Prayer Book went as well. For a variety of reasons, including its deeply biblical theology and incomparable use of language, the Book of Common Prayer issued in 1662 became the established liturgy of the Church of England for three hundred years. While minor variations were introduced in different countries and over time, it remained largely intact. In Canada the last revision was published in 1962.

With the arrival of the liturgical renewal movement of the early 1970's things began to change considerably. New liturgies, especially for the Eucharist, were experimented with throughout the Church. There was an assumption that after a period of experimentation the Church would authorize one set of contemporary services for common use. That is, the whole Canadian Church would settle down to worship either with the BCP or the new services or both. Most Anglicans could see the value in this even if they didn't agree with all the changes in the new book.

Most of these expectations seem to have been met with the publication of the Book of

Alternative Services in 1985. True, the Church no longer was unified by liturgy but at least there was a sense that we could live with just the two patterns of common prayer. Those who desired worship in other contemporary forms, for example, were discouraged and told that they would have to convince the rest of the Church to revise the BAS before they could do so. Officially, at least, the Anglican instinct for common prayer was still alive.

Unofficially, however, it has been a different story. Even as the BAS was being introduced at least one diocesan bishop was telling his clergy that the ultimate goal of liturgical renewal was that each parish would have its own do it yourself liturgy! These would share a similar shape but would be largely customized to the needs and emphases of each particular congregation. He went on to demonstrate by leading the clergy in an "extempore" Eucharist, more or less making it up as he went. At the same time, he followed the general pattern of eucharistic worship that had emerged from recent liturgical scholarship.

While this approach did not really catch on at the time, things have nevertheless continued to develop in the same direction. There are a number of evangelical parishes, for example, who were not happy with the BAS but still wanted a contemporary service. Some of them have just put together their own liturgy with or without the explicit permission of their bishop. Others simply omitted or changed the portions of the BAS which caused offence. At the other end of the theological spectrum more radical liberals "experimented" with new liturgies that more directly reflected their concerns than did the BAS.

All of this led to considerable pressure at official levels to push on beyond the BAS without actually revising the book itself. The Evaluation Commission on the Book of Alternative Services recommended that supplementary material be prepared which would contain a number of different contemporary language eucharistic rites. One would be "inclusive in its language about God", one would "embody Reformed theological conscience" (the theology of the Book of Common Prayer in modern language) and one would "allow local communities to explore ways of including native spiritual traditions and other cultural expressions that are in keeping with

Christian worship" (General Synod 1995 Report, p.10). After some revisions, General Synod accepted their recommendations and the material is now available online along with two Services of the Word.

In spite of this tendency toward "uncommon prayer" it must be said that the BAS seems to have become the regular liturgy in most parishes, even if many make changes of one kind or another. Some of these are fairly minor, while others might extend even to the insertion of a different Creed. The BAS has virtually replaced the BCP, but it does not have the same unifying force: it has a lot of variety, it is much modified and other forms have been authorized. Besides that, many parishes use liturgies from other countries that speak more clearly of their theology than does the BAS. Some parishes continue to put together their own services from various sources.

If it is true to say that for three hundred years the Book of Common Prayer served as a key ingredient of the glue that held the Church together, it is also true to say that the BAS has only done the same for a portion of it, those in the middle. There seems to be some movement to revise the BAS but it is not at all clear how the National Church is going to proceed with liturgical change at this stage. Given the divisions we have been considering, it is no wonder that revision does not seem to have a very high priority.

One of the things that is actually tending to hold the ACC together, perhaps, is the use of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). In the early 1980's the RCL was introduced into the ACC and when the BAS was published it included the RCL, an ecumenical effort originating in the Roman Catholic Mass Lectionary. On a three-year cycle and including an Old Testament reading, this exposes the church-going Anglican to a lot more of the Bible because the Book of Common Prayer had the same Epistle and Gospel on a given Sunday each year. That can't be a bad thing! However, the RCL is not used universally in the ACC, and at least one Diocese excludes its use.

One of the former signs of Anglican unity and order was the fact that the vast majority of the parishes not only worshipped with one liturgy, but they also sang from the same hymn book.

From the largest cathedrals to the lowliest of country churches one found neatly arranged pairs of "red books" (BCPs) and "blue books" (Book of Common Praise (1938)) waiting the arrival of worshippers.

In a few parishes this is still the case, but it is probably accurate to say that most Anglican congregations worship with the "green book" (BAS) and sing from the "blue book". The latter is "Common Praise" (1998), which has almost completely replaced the rather unlamented "red book" or, as it was officially known, "The Hymn Book of the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada" (1971). This joint effort, arising in a time when church union was under discussion, found a welcome home in many parishes but certainly not in all. Some bought it only to regret their decision later when they realized that many of the old favourites were left out or had unfamiliar tunes and the newer hymns proved unattractive. Others simply ignored it altogether. One thing is for sure: it never became "the hymn book" its name implies. It seemed to fade away with the failure of the attempt to bring the two churches together.

In 1986 the National Executive Council set up a Hymn Book Task Force to replace the Red Book. This group reported to the 1995 General Synod with a proposed collection of hymns and was authorized to complete the preparation of the book for presentation to the Council of General Synod for permission to publish.

While there are a number of guiding principles in the process, the one that shall concern us here is the desire to provide the Church with hymns that conform to modern sensibilities about the use of inclusive language. The editors have, however, moved far beyond the commonly accepted practice of using inclusive language in reference to human beings. They have altered the language about God himself (herself?)! This has required significant modification of many familiar hymns. In the hymn "Joyful, joyful we adore thee", for example, the line that reads "Thou our Father, Christ our Brother" becomes "Thou(!) our Father and our Mother".

Enormous effort has gone into the attempt to avoid the exclusive "masculinity" of both God the

Father and God the Son. Naturally with such an approach there is a subsequent vagueness when it comes to the Trinity. The more radical changes include the proclamation that God is "Womb of life and source of being" (#390) and "strong mother God" (#395) while another (#392) invites substituting "the great Sophia" for "holy Wisdom". "Sophia" is the Greek word for "wisdom", which the Bible sometimes personifies as female. The major justification for using it as a term for God comes from the apocryphal book entitled Wisdom of Solomon. To use "the great Sophia" as suggested may be questionable also in that many today are promoting the worship of the Greek goddess of the same name.

There is much that could be said here but perhaps it is sufficient to suggest that changing a pronoun or name for God, say from "father" to "parent", significantly changes the meaning. A father is a particular kind of parent, after all. Most Anglicans understand that God is neither male nor female but has chosen to reveal himself in male categories because they best express his character in terms we can understand. A different God emerges when other unbiblical categories (cf. "old aching God" [#392]) and pronouns are used. So many will be uninterested in buying and using a hymn book that contains hymns that they find foreign and even offensive. The fact that many Anglicans no doubt find the traditional/biblical language for God offensive only proves the overall point I am trying to make about our divisions.

It is interesting that the convener of the Task Force that produced "Common Praise" has indicated that "...the (new) hymn book is a collection of diverse voices, which speak in different ways to different people." This worship at the altar of diversity only confirms that our hymnody reflects our fractured reality. Our Church has no way theologically to assess all this diversity: it can only assume that, because a position is advocated by Anglicans, it is a valid expression of the Anglican faith. Certainly, there was no Church-wide consultation, let alone consensus, regarding these innovations.

Theological concerns aside, there is another reason significant numbers of parishes resist the use of "Common Praise". Like its "official" predecessors, Blue Book presents hymns more or less in

the traditional style, some old and some new. In the meantime, much of the Church, mainly from the evangelical/charismatic side, came under the broad influence of the "renewal" movement.

Trans-denominational in scope, this phenomenon has produced a wide variety of music in response to its emphasis on more expressive worship. We find choruses, songs and hymns written in a bewildering variety by a large number of talented authors and musicians and it has become very popular at the grassroots level. Critically, it requires something other than organ to support it and so worship teams have been developed to lead the congregation with piano, keyboard, guitar, trumpet and even drums. While perhaps only a few Anglican parishes have gone this full route, many have taken up this type of music with enthusiasm. Much of it is written in contemporary music styles and in this sense is thus more directly plugged into modern life than the older hymns.

Because renewal music is so broadly based and is in constant state of rapid development, it cannot be contained in any one book. By the nature of the music, any such publication is soon out of date. Perhaps it is true to say that the British compilation, "Mission Praise", has stood the test of time best, containing as it does a good selection of older hymns along with some of the more tested modern efforts.

In this climate it is literally every parish for itself. It has to pick and choose its way through the various offerings. Some parishes buy a copyright license and, using overhead projectors, mix and match from a number of different sources for any particular service (also on the overhead and sometimes also a mix and match from different liturgies). It is quite possible for an Anglican who is reasonably familiar with this kind of music to visit a parish and encounter music which she has never heard before. Fortunately, it is usually catchy and easy to learn. But, by its very nature as a unique mix, it expresses our increasing divisions in yet another way. We are indeed no longer singing from the same hymn book. The old ideal of "common praise" is further away than ever.

On another front, any large organization wanting to ensure that its new members would grasp its purpose and methods would provide them with a vigorous standard program of instruction. In this way they could be shaped and molded to take their place in the overall efficient operation of the enterprise. Without such training the membership would soon have little sense of a common cause or shared goals. Eventually such an organization would find itself falling into chaos and unable, as a result, to function properly.

Recognizing this truth has led many Christian denominations to produce a Sunday School curriculum intended for use in all their congregations. Each member then has a common educative experience which helps create a shared understanding of the Faith and leads to a profound sense of unity, even among a widely scattered flock.

Such was the historical experience of the Anglican Church of Canada. Through its General Board of Religious Education (G.B.R.E.) an extensive Sunday School curriculum was made available to the parishes of the denomination. By all accounts it was almost universally used and made a significant contribution to the sense of being part of the same Church. In some areas teachers from various parishes would even get together on a regular basis in order to prepare themselves for upcoming lessons and work out any problems. Reading it today one is struck, almost amazed, by both its breadth and depth. It is hard to imagine a modern Church providing such a rigorous and thoroughgoing education for its younger members. The teachers' manual for each grade came in a lengthy hardback volume. It is clear that a great deal was expected of both teacher and student. Any child passing through such a system would be well on her way to a good start in the Christian faith.

The difference in the scene today could not be more profound. There is no longer any denominational Sunday School curriculum produced "in house". The Anglican Journal reports that over a third of parishes are using the successor to the ecumenical "Whole People of God" curriculum, the "Seasons of the Spirit"². In fact, it was "adopted by the ACC as its recommended

² "Curriculum Meets Different Needs", Oct. 1, 2009, Nancy Devine

curriculum". According to the article it has had mixed reviews, partly because of its left/liberal slant on social issues. Parishes that pass on it are using a wide variety of other curricula, a number of which originate in the interdenominational evangelical context. In any event, with only a third of our parishes using the recommended curriculum, any sense of unity derived from the use of a common curriculum has long since diminished. And I haven't even mentioned those parishes that DIY!

The change seems to have started with the introduction of the so called "New Curriculum" in the early sixties. This was apparently meant as an update to replace the G.B.R.E. program of previous generations. Unfortunately, the new program was not terribly well received and within a decade it had vanished along with the G.B.R.E. itself. That part of the National Church which is responsible for Christian education has been reduced to a shadow of its former self, almost completely absorbed by a larger committee. Into the vacuum have swept these various contenders for the crown but so far there is no clear winner. Instead, the fragmentation of the denomination as a whole continues through its Sunday Schools, leaving less and less likelihood that they will be able to make any lasting contribution to a common vision.

When we turn to other educational programs beyond the Sunday School the picture becomes even more confused. Here, in the absence of any solid statistical information, one is forced to rely on personal experience and observation and so what follows must be taken with this limitation in mind.

It is true to say that there has been a welcome movement in the denomination towards providing an educational process for those seeking baptism for themselves or their children. This comes out of a renewed understanding of the importance of baptism as the fundamental moment of entry into the Church. The problem is that this "educational process" seems to be different in every parish!

Few dioceses, if any, have a common approach, although it is likely that if proper studies were done certain common patterns would emerge. It is clear, however, that such programs range from the rigorous to the undemanding. One of the minor tensions between clergy is created by the fact that in one parish those seeking baptism might have to attend a course for a number of months and wait until a given Sunday for the service while in the parish next door the rector is willing to baptize more or less "on request" with little or no preparation. However, the trend has certainly been towards more rather than less baptismal preparation.

Regardless of the method or form of instruction there remains the question of its content. Here we have an even bigger question mark. The truth is that no one knows what baptismal candidates in the Anglican Church of Canada are being taught about the faith. This is usually, if not always, left up to the individual rector and reflects his or her understanding and emphasis. Given the wide divergences here, it is safe to assume that this diversity is reflected in the entry level educational process, whatever its form.

Confirmation preparation presents a similar scenario. In days gone by it was understood that one had to memorize the Catechism in order to be confirmed. On page 544 of the Book of Common Prayer we are told in capital letters that this Instruction is "to be learned by every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop". This is now largely ignored. Certainly, it would shock most candidates to be asked by a bishop even to recite the Apostle's Creed! What is being done instead? Who knows? Most rectors make a conscientious effort to prepare their candidates as best they can along whatever lines they think necessary but there is little commonality observable. They are on their own.

To make matters even more complicated and to once again show how divided the denomination really is, it is necessary to observe that there is a vigorous internal debate going on about the very nature and place of Confirmation in the modern church. It used to be that one had to be confirmed in order to receive Holy Communion. However, the renewed emphasis on baptism as

the full initiation rite has led to the communication not only of unconfirmed children but even of infants in some parishes. This has obviously removed a major reason for being Confirmed.

Many continue to see Confirmation to be valid as an opportunity for a person to take on his or her baptismal vows in a personal way and this has helped open the question about the proper age at which it should be undertaken. Oddly, this has resulted in one side saying it really is for children when they reach "the age of accountability" (perhaps as young as six or seven but always variable with each child), while another would have it delayed until one's basic calling in life has been chosen, seeing it more as a vocational ordination (perhaps as old as twenty-five or so depending again on the individual circumstances). Still others wish to retain the traditional age of around thirteen! At least one diocese, in response to all this, announced its intention to suspend confirmations altogether! To say the contemporary Church does not enjoy a common mind on this once-settled topic is to engage in serious understatement. Again, our fragmentation is evident.

Another area of educational disarray is marriage preparation. Again, on the one hand it is a huge step forward to provide this an age where marriage is seen as optional for couples living together and divorce is so common, but there is no common way that it is being done. Like baptism and confirmation, marriage preparation is largely left in the hands of individual rectors to do their own thing. In some locations there can be a significant amount of sharing this through a course or program offered more widely, should the rector wish to make use of it. But it is up to her or him to do so.

This is especially a matter of concern because baptism, confirmation, and marriage represent opportunities to evangelize our own membership and those who are on the periphery. It is at these points that we have an audience made up of many who are unchurched. However, our track record with all these efforts demonstrates they have been largely a failure from this perspective.

When one turns to the issue of Anglican adult Christian education things get murkier yet, if possible. The unfortunate pattern has been to treat Confirmation as kind of a graduation exercise after which there was no particular expectation or provision for continuing education. It is almost unheard of, for example, for an Anglican parish to have an adult Sunday School class. It may surprise many Anglicans to discover that this is routine in many other denominations.

Many parishes try to fill the gap by promoting the practice of daily devotions through the use of material provided by Scripture Union or Forward Movement. Others have a Bible Study group, usually led by the rector for a faithful few. In addition, groups come together on an occasional basis (often in Lent) to study particular issues. Some bring in a lecturer or a missionary from time to time as well. The best that many can seem to offer a small library or a book/pamphlet rack at the back of the church.

But as far as a systematic approach to adult continuing Christian education is concerned, it is largely non-existent. Again, where it does exist, there is not only a variety of forms, there is a variety of content. The picture is truly bewildering.

Bewildering. That would be the word for this whole scene. Unless one wanted to use "confusing", "chaotic", "inconsistent", "fragmented", "complicated" or at best, "variegated", "diverse" or even "flexible". Whichever word one chooses, none can bear the weight of unity. To the extent that one might hope for a sense of the latter to come through or be encouraged by the life of the local Church, one is clearly in for a serious disappointment. If anything, the opposite is probably true.

Our educational scene is undoubtedly a clear reflection of the division that is characteristic of the whole denomination. Even worse, in turning our backs on the denominational Sunday School curriculum and the teaching of the Catechism we have abandoned the two common denominators that we did have in this area. All this when we lack a truly common liturgy or praise. Any of these, like so much of our past, seems beyond imagining, let alone beyond recovering.

It is difficult to remember that not that long ago Anglican congregations were worshipping with the same liturgy, singing from the same hymn book, listening to the same anthems, reading the same portions of Scripture and having their children taught from the same lessons. Picture, if you can, the common bond this shared experience could create between complete strangers coming together for wider Church meetings. While there would certainly be differences of opinion they would nevertheless share a common outlook, and this would greatly enable them to work together.

Modern Anglican worship reality is much more diverse: the "smells and bells" of a Prayer Book anglo-catholic celebration of high mass, the sweetgrass smoke of a native circle, the raised hands of boisterous charismatics praising Jesus and using the BAS on an overhead projector and the relaxed informality of an evangelical congregation with a do-it yourself liturgy. Each of these services employ different hymn-books and use different musical accompaniment from pipe organ to small band to guitar to native drums.

While diversity is often seen as an undefined blessing, what would complete strangers coming from such radically diverse parish environments have in common? Ask them to work together on a wider church basis and see what happens. What happens is reflective of the wider crisis in the Church. It is no mystery.

Now it can be argued that the diversity within the Anglican Church of Canada is no more than that which the church has always experienced. After all, the Christians gathered for the great council at Nicea in 325 A.D. looked and sounded a lot different from those gathered at the great missionary congress at Exeter Hall, London in 1840. This is true. The Gospel has adapted itself to hundreds, perhaps thousands of different cultures. But it is also true that no one tried to put all these different expressions of Christianity into the same organizational body and expect them to function well together! Difficult as such a challenge would have been in the past, it pales beside the one facing the ACC.

If it were only a matter of "different expressions" of the one faith, as at Nicea and at London, there might be some hope of eventually discovering common ground in the essential truths of that faith. In other words, one could theoretically distinguish between form and content, between outward appearance and inward reality. However, as the next chapter will demonstrate, much of the diversity in the Anglican Church can be traced to the fact that the "common ground in the essentials of the faith" is simply no longer present in the institution. This threatens to make any effort to discover an underlying unity an exercise in futility.

Symptom 5: A Complex Superiority

In a healthy organization the leadership is ever attentive to the needs and desires of its membership. This is a basic rule. Violate it and you are in big trouble. Because of it we find politicians poring over the latest poll results with great care and paying vast sums to those who can devise and interpret them. Another critical leadership function is to be able to communicate vision and direction for the organization in such a way that it gathers the enthusiastic support of the membership. The latter must feel an important part of the whole enterprise by being consulted, informed and empowered.

From this perspective as well there are many signs that the Anglican Church of Canada is indeed in big trouble. A large gap has opened up between the person in the pew and the clergy elite who provide the leadership. The Christian church, in almost all of its manifestations, has struggled with "clericalism", the dominance of the clergy. This is nothing new. But in the Anglican Church it appears to be especially virulent, making a very real contribution to the present crisis.

Speaking as an insider on this issue I can testify that, at our worst moments, many clergy seem convinced that only what we do and what we are concerned about have true significance in the life of the Church. Indeed, this is what we often mean when we talk about what "is going on in the Church". The rank and file membership often appear merely as a backdrop to the real drama.

This, I would reiterate, is at our worst moments! But they are real ones, human ones, that often result in our seeing things from a very narrow career-oriented perspective.

As a newly ordained clergy person I was soon initiated into this way of thinking by listening to a conversation among a number of more senior clergy about a colleague who had once again found himself unable to function in a parish due to his own incompetence. The discussion centred solely around the need to find him another parish so that he could continue to have an income and a career. Almost no sympathy was expressed for the poor parishioners either of his last parish or the future one where he would undoubtedly wreak the same havoc again. The thought of turfing him out on his ear was simply considered unchristian.

There is some truth to this, of course. But surely it is even more unchristian to entrust the cure of souls to an incompetent priest. It is very easy to fall into this mindset as a clergy person because it is obviously in your own self-interest to do so: once you are in the club you have a high degree of job security. I am ashamed to say that I am as guilty as anyone of finding comfort in this view. But is the perspective of an elite.

Elitism is about power. Who has it and who keeps it. The clergy elite in the Anglican Church is exceptionally powerful. The numbers help tell the story. Back in 1961, when the Church was at its greatest numerical strength of 1,320,000 it was served by 1,711 parish clergy. By 1994 membership had dropped almost in half to 780,000, but the number of clergy had only dropped to 1,622. While it would be unfair to attribute this remarkable fact solely to the power of the clergy-elite it does suggest that they have been able to maintain their numbers in the face of obvious economic pressure. When one considers that the average stipend and benefits package has increased dramatically over the same period the accomplishment is all the more impressive.

But it is not just about numbers. It is about influence and direction. The clergy, as the authorized leadership in the church, have always enjoyed (and deserved) a certain amount of respect and even veneration. The title of "Reverend" is a natural reflection of this truth. In those branches of

the church, like Anglicanism, that retain a more Catholic order this tendency towards veneration seems to be more marked than in those following a congregational model. The high regard for the clergy in all Christian Churches is fundamentally a reflection of both the biblical pattern and the natural human need for hierarchical leadership. It is not wrong, but it does have its dangers.

In Anglicanism this tendency to put the clergy on a pedestal was heightened by the Catholic revival of the last century. At that time the term "Father", as a proper title for the priest, was brought back into the Church from pre-Reformation days. At its best this title highlights both the responsibilities of anyone entrusted to the care of Christ's flock and the honour due to this office. It also serves as a reminder that that, ideally, the church is a family presided over by a benevolent Father who has their best interests at heart.

However, the use of "Father" and, nowadays, "Mother", can also amplify an attitude that tends to keep the "children" in ignorance and dependence. This is all too common a feature of Anglican Church life, even among those who avoid the use of Father as a title. It is marked by an almost complete lack of serious effort toward the religious education of the laity. Sermons have become "homilies" and clergy even boast about how short they can make them! From one perspective, at least, this is an indication that lay people have no real need to be educated or knowledgeable in matters of the faith.

We need to realize, however, that knowledge is power. The less knowledgeable are subject to manipulation by the knowledgeable. It is a dangerous situation for both sides: one is tempted to control and the other to abdicate responsibility. Both are only human. While there is no evidence that the maintenance of a theologically and biblically uninformed laity has resulted from any conscious effort, it is a reality nevertheless. A sad reality.

There is also an obvious cleavage between the leadership of the Anglican Church of Canada and its membership in the arena of public life, of politics, economics and social policy. There was a time when the ACC could have been said to be the Conservative Party at prayer. While that is still

generally true of the rank and file, the clergy-elite has taken a serious veer to the left, taking positions on issue after issue that are virtually indistinguishable from those of the socialist New Democratic Party and the dictates of political correctness.

This has contributed substantially to the alienation that many members have towards their Church. They have been astounded as leaders of a religious body who have little experience of the business world have poured invective on capitalism. After all, this is the system in which these members made their living and is the only one which has lifted millions out of poverty in spite of its many shortcomings. When they even saw their Church's leaders being decidedly friendly towards the totalitarian regimes of world communism like Cuba, and other leftist regimes, they could only shake their heads in bewilderment.

Furthermore, Church leaders consistently identified leftist analysis and solutions as self-evidently more Christian than any other. One could not be in true solidarity with the poor unless one adopted a socialist solution to their plight. Hard work and personal responsibility became unmentionable qualities for those convinced that the only valid solutions had to deal with systemic problems and that usually required government intervention. Meanwhile the people in the pew were forced to deal with their own reality and found themselves pushed further and further away from their leaders.

Sociologist Reginald Bibby, in his 1986 study of the Diocese of Toronto entitled "Anglitrends", reported (p. 11) that ordinary Anglicans were only half as likely to support the socialist NDP than were the rest of the population! Eighty-one percent voted either Conservative (56%) or Liberal (25%). The gap between leaders and members in this area may have widened even further in today's acrimonious climate of cultural warfare. However, it may also be that those who have become Anglicans in the last thirty years have done so because they were attracted by the political views of the leadership of the Church. Only another similar study would tell us which is true.

One undoubted characteristic of elitism is that initiatives for change originate at the top of the organization rather than at the bottom. It is difficult to imagine an institution that better fits this pattern than the Anglican Church of Canada. With few exceptions one is hard-pressed to name any recent change that has developed at the insistence of those at the grassroots. In fact, in most instances, but not all, the changes have met with at least bewilderment if not outright resistance from this level.

The classic example of this is the process which led to the introduction of the Book of Alternative Services. There was no discernible push for modern liturgies from the person in the pew. No petitions were circulated among parishioners calling for major revisions to the Book of Common Prayer. Whatever the merits of the proposed new liturgy, from beginning to end its introduction was an initiative "from above". Church leaders had been educated in the theories of the liturgical renewal movement of the 1960's and also saw a clear need to move away from the BCP for theological reasons (see next Chapter).

Certainly, a concerted effort was made to obtain input and feedback from as wide a range of Anglicans as possible but many who participated in the process felt that they were nevertheless ignored. The evangelical community, for example, submitted weighty critiques of the proposed Eucharistic Prayers but to no avail. The leadership of the Church was fully aware that these Anglicans has serious objections and yet the Book was published anyway.³

This is the behaviour of an elite. It assumes that it has the proper perspective from which the good of all can be pursued. Surrounded by the like-minded and having discounted other possibilities as outmoded or even dangerous, such groups show a marked tendency to filter out those things that do not fit into their agenda. This behaviour is largely unconscious and is almost certainly unintended. This, however, does not make the pain it inflicts any less real, as anyone who read the "Letters to the Editor" section of the Anglican Journal during this period can testify.

³ It should be noted that a belated partial response did eventually come in the form of a Supplementary Eucharistic Prayer as noted on page 22, above.

But even worse was to come when the BAS was finally issued and introduced into parishes. The official line, which was followed by many, held that the BAS was only an alternative to the BCP. Nevertheless, in diocese after diocese there was pressure from above, often not at all subtle, to introduce and use this book in spite of the wishes of the rector or the people. In many other parishes, rectors eager for change assigned the BCP to the early Communion while the main service was exclusively BAS (and exclusively Holy Communion, but that is another [similar] story). In at least one diocese the bishop had to point out to his clergy that this was not an acceptable interpretation of "alternative"! Diocesan services often became exclusively BAS.

These impositions caused much unrest and even heartache as the beloved BCP began to disappear from use. Many, perhaps even thousands, have left the church or have become inactive because of this one issue. Within a year of the BAS's debut, Reginald Bibby reported in *Anglitrends* that 31% of less active Anglicans cited changes in styles of worship as a key factor in their alienation (p. 94). This is not to imply that the BAS was always and everywhere introduced with insensitivity or rejected with vehemence. However there does appear to have been a widespread pattern of the clergy-elite going in one direction and the people going along reluctantly at best.

The overall sense of angst among the laity resulting from all these developments is best said by a published report from one of the delegates to a General Synod in the late '90's. I think it still captures the mood of many, many ordinary Anglicans. The author has been involved at the highest levels of administration in her own diocese and is as knowledgeable as anyone about what is really going on in the Church. She was struck by the faith and commitment of the members of Synod and that one could "...easily come away with a glowing feeling that as Anglicans we have it all right...". But that was not the reality as she soon discovered:

Each day during meal times and afterhour gatherings, I met and spoke with Anglicans from big cities, farming communities, northern company towns, native reserves, and small town

Canada. When we got past the initial chatty exchanges, inevitably the story was the same. Smaller congregations, shrinking budgets, the absence of young people, burn out - not only of the clergy but overworked lay volunteers, loss of spirit, and, in general, all the signs of a real crisis. (INCOURAGE, October 1995, p. 2)

Most involved Anglicans know very well that their Church is in a serious crisis. It is not only the subject of the table-talk at General Synod but wherever two or three Anglicans are gathered together for conversation, there it is in the midst of them! It is the reality in which we live and move and have our being.

In the first edition of this work, written twenty years ago, I went to great lengths to show that the leaders of our Church, especially at the national level, were in denial about what was happening. Thankfully, this is no longer true. The decline in membership, at least, has been devastating and obvious to all. This is in spite of the fact that no national statistics have been made available now for eleven years. One wonders if they have been just too alarming or depressing to publish!⁴

While there has been no co-ordinated national effort to reverse the trend, a great deal of effort has gone into at least managing the decline as best as possible at the diocesan level. This is to be commended, in spite of the pain it has caused. It is far better to have a plan about how to do the downsizing and rationalizing of ministry resources than to not have a plan at all.

The Diocese of British Columbia may be the canary in the mine for the rest of us. This diocese, which encompasses Vancouver Island and is headquartered in Victoria, has been hit particularly hard by membership loss. This is perhaps partly because the region was more “British” than the rest of Canada and thus had relatively more Anglican churches in relationship to the overall population. Just over half a century ago forty percent of the population was Anglican and now it

⁴ The official reason is that the methods of collecting the data are unreliable. However, parishes continue to fill out and submit them as required.

is about 1.2 percent! Of course, the population of the area has grown considerably at the same time but not including enough committed Anglicans to avoid serious decline.

A diocesan report called for the closure of 19 out of its 54 churches and pointed out the precarious condition of another 13. To its credit the diocese has started the painful process of downsizing and some of the churches are to be part of reconstituted “hub” churches. It has been agreed that about 7 of the 19 will indeed be closed down entirely. Although diocesan leaders insist that all this is to facilitate ministry in a new era, many see it as driven by the obvious decline in numbers and shrinking diocesan and parish budgets. Time will tell if these and other initiatives will turn the tide.

It is highly likely that this is the form of response that will be typical across the country as more and more dioceses come to terms with the new reality. In the short term, at least, there is little option. In my area, twenty years ago the city of Saint John, New Brunswick, had 12 churches, each with a full-time rector. Now, there are just four full-time rectors, seven churches, one unusable church, and one mission. Part-time and bi-vocational priests are fast becoming the norm while diocesan structures and expectations struggle to keep up. Parishes have been closed and amalgamated with others where possible, churches sold or torn down and many people upset.

As one might easily surmise, the impact of this crisis has fallen heavily upon our clergy. Not having a solution to the situation, the leadership is at least attempting to develop a strategy for survival. The typical clergy conference brings in an expert of some sort who makes it clear to the clergy that the coming major decline in church membership will impact severely upon their careers. Now that the tsunami of decline has finally arrived at each of our doorsteps, the profession is undergoing a severe testing, resulting in much stress.

The Church of the future will obviously have less full-time clergy because it will only be about half the present size. In fact, the clergy are being encouraged to take a second job and thus become

"bi-vocational". The expectation is that many will only be able to have a part-time position in the Church and will need that second job if they hope to pull in an adequate income. Furthermore, greater emphasis will be placed on the role of non-stipendiary clergy. This is a very hard message for the current clergy community to hear. To have to think about a second "vocation" in mid-career is extremely traumatic to those used to a high degree of job security and whose skills are not as portable as some others.

Beyond even this it is becoming all too clear that the nature of the job itself, even for those few who might remain in full-time positions, will have to change significantly. The current crop of clergy received its calling and training within the old system and has learned to function within its various structures and expectations. Basically, clergy were seen as the persons in the Church who did "the ministry". They are now discovering that they are to become those who train the laity for ministry and this is not necessarily welcome news. At the very least it raises questions about their own calling and their ability to take on new tasks for which they may have neither appropriate gifts nor training.

All this is to say that the reality of the crisis is beginning to take its toll within the clergy of the Anglican Church of Canada. Being on the frontlines, they know very well that the Church is in serious trouble and that they are going to take their share of the inevitable difficulties ahead. Discontentment has become one of the burdens of office. Younger clergy wonder if there will be a place for them at all while older clergy find themselves unattractive to parishes desperate to attract younger people back to church. What was formerly a pastoral relationship between the bishop and his clergy is descending into the vortex of employee - employer relationships including the inevitable involvement of lawsuits and lawyers.

When we add to this the long list of problems already facing the profession as a whole, the sense of crisis increases almost to the breaking point. A catalogue of these would include marriage breakdown, underpayment, a perceived loss of power vis a vis the bishops, lack of collegiality, multiplication of meetings, little measurable career success, loss of prestige in the community,

an unresponsive bureaucracy, unending conflict, an uncertain message, workaholism, too many hours, changed role expectations, lack of supervision or accountability, inadequate training, unending parish and diocesan budget pressures, and, finally...burnout. The continuing difficulties of the Church in dealing with incompetence or in restoring those who require rehabilitation only completes the disturbing picture.

None of this is imply that Anglican clergy are worse off than many other professionals or that there are no compensating factors which can make their calling rich and rewarding. However, it is very difficult to imagine a group of "employees" more dissatisfied with their current job experience than the clergy of the Anglican Church of Canada. Here I speak from the inside, as one who has been to many clergy conferences, engaged in countless conversations and observed the situation first hand. It is thoroughly demoralizing. Conditions are well into the danger zone. Ask the bishops! They are so busy trying to put out the "fires" resulting from all this stress that they have almost no time for their traditional role of chief pastor and teacher.

Conclusion: Somebody Call a Doctor!

So much for the symptoms. Clearly, we are seriously ill. It is also clear that we are beginning to live with our sickness, adjusting our activities to those we can still perform. But what is the disease with which we are afflicted? Can it be cured? Is it fatal?

It is true that some of the decline of the ACC is due to the enormous changes that have taken place in our society. As in most of the "Christian" world, Canada has become secularized and religion has lost ground across the board. But while many denominations have suffered decline, some have not. For example, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada report a slight increase in attendance from 2015-2016 and holding its own over the last few years. It is also a fact that a few Anglican parishes are thriving against all odds. Why is this so?

The fact that not all Christian denominations are in such radical decline suggests that the rampant secularism of our society cannot explain our losses of membership by itself. There must be another reason or reasons for this disaster that help explain our situation and perhaps point the way to recovery.

And, therefore, we must dig deeper in order to discover the real reasons for our particular decline.

CHAPTER THREE

How We Got Here from There

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light.

1 Corinthians 3:10-13

We will now explore how certain ideas and events which have made significant contributions to the current crisis in the Anglican Church of Canada. While this book makes no claim to be scholarly, it nevertheless represents a serious effort to grapple with the reality of our past by one who knows at least something whereof he speaks. Although I must take responsibility for what I have written, it is important to stress that many in the Church share at least the general point of view here expressed. There are many voices crying out in the wilderness.

If the following explanation needs correction it is urgent that it be done quickly in order to spare us from unnecessary conflict and division. We can only be brought closer together by the truth and it is in the give and take of discussion (or argument!) that illusions will dissolve and truth will emerge. However, none of this should be taken as implying a lack of confidence in the fundamental correctness of what I have to say.

I shall argue that, in reality, our major problems are primarily caused or made worse by the introduction of what is generally known as "liberalism" into the life of our denomination. Until this situation is dealt with, the other problems, and there are many, cannot be effectively

addressed or resolved. I shall demonstrate that liberalism is not the classical Christianity of our mothers and fathers of the last two thousand years. It is in fact another religion altogether and actually stands opposed to classical Christianity on almost every important theological issue.

Our crisis exists largely, but not exclusively, because these two incompatible and opposed religions, each with its own vision and purpose, co-exist in our church. This is our fundamental problem. It has led to a terrible kind of institutional paralysis. No organization can long continue healthy in such a state of division.

It is also important to note that in the heat of argument I may sound like I am laying the entire blame for all our problems on “liberalism” and “liberals” and I want to nip this impression in the bud. I am indeed convinced that liberalism is our major problem and that is what I am trying to convey. But it is not our only problem and the blame must fall on all our shoulders. We have all been in this together and we all need to repent of things we have done or have left undone. But the urgency of the current situation forces me to focus on the most important thing.

In order to do so, I need to make certain judgments and abstractions that simplify a complex reality for the sake of argument. I need to address one of these at the outset in order to avoid as much misunderstanding as possible. None of what I say below is meant to imply that the ACC is neatly divided into conservative and liberal Christians as if each of us was a perfect embodiment of our pre-suppositions. Life and people are much more complicated than that and most of us are mixed up to one degree or another! No, this is a call for each of us to examine our basic principles and see how they have been leading us to this point in our history and beyond. If you are one of the many Anglicans who are kind of in the middle, more or less, I hope you see this partly as a call for all of us to be more honest about, and consistent with, those principles. Whatever they may be.

In order to better judge the validity of my above-stated thesis, it is necessary to see things in historical perspective. In this manner it is easier to see that what has happened in the Church is

not merely the natural development of Anglicanism's famous comprehensiveness. Rather something fundamental has changed, bringing us into a situation entirely without precedent. As such, old solutions will simply not do. Something more will be needed.

From its very origins in the sixteenth century, the Church of England (and its daughter churches in other countries) has been relatively tolerant of a variety of theological perspectives. It is beyond the scope of this treatise to outline the reasons for this tolerance but there is no dispute about its reality.

However, something does need to be said about the general nature of this tolerance. Until recently it has been a tolerance within certain well-understood limits and which presumed a core of basic Christian truth shared within the one holy catholic church ("catholic" in the sense of "universal", containing all the branches of Christ's scattered flock).

This attitude was perhaps best expressed by the seventeenth century cleric Richard Baxter to whom is often credited the famous dictum: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty, and in all things, charity"⁵. By following this in a kind of informal fashion over the years, the Anglican community has been able to hold an amazing diversity of views within its bosom while retaining a significant degree of cohesion. The latter, strained almost to the breaking point at several moments in its history, has nevertheless managed to hold. At least until now.

What has held it together has been a more or less universal acceptance of what constitutes those "essentials", the common ground upon which we stand. Historically this was the specific function of the famous "Thirty-Nine Articles" that appear at the end of the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 698-714).

⁵ See "Anglican Essentials", p. 11: <http://www.anglicancommunionalliance.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Montreal-Declaration-for-ACA-Website-PDF-FINAL.pdf>

Here we find what used to be the basic doctrines of the Anglican faith. Generations of clergy had to agree to them as part of the ordination process "...for the avoiding of diversities of opinions and for the establishing of consent touching true religion." This quotation is from the Title Page that used to precede the Articles (prior to 1962) along with King Charles the First's "Royal Declaration" of 1628. In the latter the king recognized that there was indeed some leeway of interpretation of the Articles but he took care to guard their centrality, insisting that all clergymen

...agree in the true, usual, literal meaning of the said Articles, and that even in those curious points, in which the present differences lie, men of all sorts take the Articles of the Church of England to be for them: which is an argument...that none of them intend any desertion of the Articles established.

...no man hereafter shall either print, or preach, to draw the Article aside in any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof: and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense.

...if any publick Reader in either of Our Universities, or any Head or Master of a College, or any other person respectively in either of them, shall affix any new sense to any Article, or shall publickly read, determine, or hold any publick Disputation or suffer any such to be held ..,he, or they the Offenders, shall be liable to Our displeasure, and the Church's censure...(BCP [1918 ed.], p. 658)

So much for authentic Anglican tolerance! In practice this seemed to result in a significant variety of opinion within these parameters. Even at the height of his fierce battle with anglo-catholicism, the controversial nineteenth century evangelical Bishop of Liverpool, J. C. Ryle was able to say:

I have always allowed, and do allow, that our Church is largely comprehensive, and that there is room for honest High, honest Low, and honest Broad Churchmen within her

pale...But I firmly maintain that the comprehensiveness of the Church has limits, and that those limits are the Thirty-nine Articles and the Prayer-book. (Principles for Churchmen, p. 71)

Historically, then, the Anglican Church has always known both that it had borders and where those borders were, more or less. It is now necessary to ask what enabled it to mark out such clear boundaries in the first place. When we have discovered these foundations and what has happened to them, then we will understand why there is such confusion in the contemporary Church and perhaps even find a way forward through all the noise.

An important historical event can serve to shed some light on the true roots of our commonality as Anglicans. At the same time that Ryle was concerning himself with what now seem to be quaint and insignificant divisions within the Church of England, there was a gathering sense of optimism regarding the possibility of Christian reunification. In reflecting on these matters during the Lambeth Conference of 1888 the bishops of the Church carefully outlined another, more minimal, list of Christian "essentials" upon which any hope for a reunified Christendom must rest. This became known as the "Lambeth Quadrilateral" and it is worth quoting in full at this point.

- A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- B. The Apostle's Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol, and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- C. The two Sacraments, - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, - ministered with the unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
- D. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the various needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church. (Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, p. 877-8)

There are a number of things that should be noted about in considering this important document. First of all, in the first clause, there is an inherent expression of the final authority of the Bible over the Church. Many Anglicans have been taught that authority in Anglican theology is seen as “a three-legged stool” of Scripture, reason and tradition. To the extent that this metaphor implies the equivalence of these three sources, it is simply wrong.

It is better to say that Anglicans recognize the importance of reason and tradition in seeking to understand what it is that Scripture is saying. Even more important, we are never to put reason or tradition over Scripture. It is the ultimate authority and this is what we see all the bishops of the Church affirming when they insisted on this clause.

The second thing to meditate upon is that it was the bishops who issued this affirmation of the authority and place of Scripture in Anglicanism. They took the initiative and provided significant leadership not only to those within the Anglican fold but also to the whole of the Christian church. Today they are, at least in Canada, largely silent on the point of the centrality of the place of Scripture.

Not only are they silent, they give every appearance of urging silence on the rest of the Church as well. When others, out of a sense of frustration and urgency, gathered themselves together outside the official structures of the Church at “Essentials 94” in Montreal in an attempt to offer a contemporary list of essentials for consideration they received a very cool reception from many in official positions of leadership. It seems that the very idea of insisting on a number of essentials, whatever those are conceived to be, is just not on. Needless to say, this represents a radical change from the situation that existed up to the turn of the twentieth century.

The third thing is to observe that J.C. Ryle's insistence on the Thirty-nine Articles and the Prayer Book does not contradict what the bishops say about the position of the Bible in the Church. After all, these two standards maintain the same attitude toward Scriptural authority expressed by the Quadrilateral. Indeed, until recently, our Church has spoken with one voice on this subject. The

position of the Bible was the central theological issue underlying the English Reformation (as it was in other parts of Europe).

And it is not just Anglicans who have always seen the Bible as the ultimate standard of faith. It is but the natural outgrowth of catholic Christianity's conviction about the nature of the Holy Scriptures. All Christendom held that the Scriptures are the very Word of God written and are without error in all that they affirm. This was the view of Our Lord, the Apostles and early church, the Fathers, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Thomas Cramner and all the English Reformers, Richard Hooker (the quintessential Anglican theologian) and all the Anglican "divines". While it is true that this doctrine has never been officially adopted by the Anglican Church it is the unspoken but necessary assumption that runs through the whole foundation of its theological structure.

Until quite recently, there was simply no serious debate or division on this issue in the whole history of the Christian faith. The only question was not about the nature of the Bible but about whether or not its authority was superseded in some way by that of the Church. On this question, as we have seen, Anglicanism has always said that the Church is under the Scriptures and not vice versa. This was re-affirmed as recently as the Lambeth Conference of 1958.

So far, I have sought to argue that Anglicanism has historically seen its famous tolerance limited by the acceptance of common set of core doctrines. These have always included an explicit affirmation of the final authority of the Scriptures as well as an implicit affirmation of the universal Christian conviction that these Scriptures were the Word of God written and thus absolutely reliable.

It is absolutely critical to recognize that all the central doctrines of the Christian church, all of the basic elements of its message, its very conception of God and what he has done in Christ for the salvation of humanity were developed out of and depend upon this attitude to the Bible.

Wherever it has held sway these same central doctrines have been held by every variation within what we have come to call the Church catholic (i.e., universal). This is not to say that the myriad and unfortunate divisions within the church have always been over relatively peripheral issues. However, when the divisions have been over core doctrine it is because one side or the other (or both!) have placed some other authority over Scripture. While I believe that what I have said is simply a matter of reason and historical fact there will be many who will dispute it on the grounds of its being overly simplistic (and probably on other grounds too!).

Let me be clear. I am not claiming that holding the classical understanding of the nature and authority of Holy Scripture automatically or easily results in the emergence of the central doctrines of the orthodox Christian faith. This is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit who both inspired the Scriptures in the first place and continues to witness to their truth and meaning in each generation. But when the guiding principle of theological reasoning is rooted in the classical view of Scripture, at the end of the day it will result in affirming the fundamental beliefs shared by all catholic Christians.

In order to both illustrate and buttress my argument I would direct my reader's attention to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada as a kind of living proof. Here we have a contemporary Christian organization which joins together what at first appears to be a bewildering variety of denominations, congregations and individuals, all of whom are committed to just the kind of Biblical authority under discussion.

While it is true that the denominations in the Fellowship remain mutually exclusive and differ considerably from one another on a number of doctrinal matters they all at the same time share a deep commitment to the central doctrines of classical orthodox Christianity. They are all Trinitarians, they all accept the pre-incarnate divinity of Our Lord, they all preach the atoning sacrifice of Jesus' death on the Cross and they all proclaim his bodily resurrection from the dead. All of them. Indeed, all subscribe to the Fellowship's "Statement of Faith" which corresponds remarkably to the core of essentials which were once considered necessary for Anglicans and all

catholic Christians. It may be important to note that, while the ACC has “observer” status, it is not a member of this body.

This organization shows how a commitment to the classical concept of Biblical authority is inevitably linked to a similar commitment to the core doctrines of classical orthodoxy. This can be observed both in history and in contemporary Christian life. Those who believe that such a commitment to Biblical authority is inadequate to produce anything but utter doctrinal confusion are simply in error. It has, in actual fact, produced remarkable doctrinal unity.

Admittedly, this unity does not extend itself over the whole range of doctrine and is not (yet) expressed in organizational unity. Denominations and movements continue to exhibit a distressing tendency to fragment even while admitting that they continue to share the basic faith with those from whom they are distancing themselves. Many still seem unwilling to make a proper distinction between what is of primary importance and what is secondary.

Perhaps it is not too arrogant suggest that a good dose of authentic Anglican tolerance (a la Richard Baxter) might help provide the perspective necessary to keep us all more fully in the family. This could be part of the witness of a reformed and renewed Anglicanism to the whole body of Christ, bringing us closer to the fulfillment of the famous Anglican plea that "... all they that do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love" (BCP, p. 75).

This intercession, by the way, is a wonderfully compact expression of the authentic Anglican understanding that Christian unity is based upon agreement about the teaching of Holy Scripture as the truth. The BCP Collect for Saint Simon and Saint Jude, reflecting the same attitude, forms an appropriate end to this section:

O Almighty God, who has built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; Grant us so to be *joined*

together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (My italics)

Not only is this prayer an appropriate end to the above discussion but it also leads us into a consideration of another aspect of the classical Anglican attitude to the Scriptures. If one is convinced that the Bible, as the Word of God written, is both absolutely trustworthy and the final authority in matters of Christian belief, one is also necessarily committed to what might be called the "conservative principle": that is, whatever the Bible teaches is not subject to revision. It is a deposit of truth which is to be guarded and passed on from one generation of believers to the next. We are to remain loyal to its message because it is the message of authentic Christianity.

This implication is rooted in the actual teaching of the Scriptures themselves. Again, and again, they exhort the church not to depart from what it has already been taught. At one point, St. Paul says that "even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned." (Gal. 1:8). There is also a dire warning at the end of the book of Revelation which could justly be taken to apply to the whole of the Bible:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city... (Rev. 22:18,19)

Just as Anglicanism has historically affirmed its commitment to the classical view of Scripture, so also has it expressed its desire to follow the conservative principle. For example, in the Supplementary Instruction (for Confirmation) from the Book of Common Prayer the candidate is asked, "Why is the Church called Apostolic?" and the answer is "Because it received its divine mission from Christ through his Apostles, and continues in their doctrine and fellowship" (p. 553). In that same Instruction we are told that the Church teaches that "The Bible records the Word of

God ...and nothing may be taught in the Church as necessary to salvation unless it be concluded or proved therefrom." (p. 554-5)

At one time in the Canadian church our Bishops explicitly committed themselves to this same view of the Bible and accepted the responsibility to "...be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word; and both privately and openly to call upon others to do the same." (BCP, p. 663) While this latter commitment is omitted by the Book of Alternative Services the new Bishop does declare "the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation;" and promises to "...be faithful in prayer, and in the study of holy scripture..." in order to "...have the mind of Christ...". He also accepts the responsibility to "...guard the faith..." of the Church (pp. 635-7) which suggests that the faith is a given.

Perhaps the most spectacular commitment to this position was made by the Bishops, clergy and laity of the very first General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in 1893. It is contained in the famous "Solemn Declaration" now included at the front of the Book of Common Prayer (p. vii). As the founding document of the denomination it bears careful consideration. This is especially true because those who brought the ACC into being clearly saw themselves as committing the denomination to this view for all posterity. It is worth quoting at this point:

We declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world, as an integral portion of the One Body of Christ composed of Churches which...hold the One Faith revealed in Holy Writ, and defined in the Creeds..., receive the same Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation; teach the same Word of God...

And we are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and as the Church

of England hath received and set forth the same in The Book of Common Prayer..., and in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity.

This commitment has never been revoked. In fact, the Declaration is given prominent place in the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer in 1959. It is preceded in that Book only by "The Preface to the Canadian Revision of 1918 Altered in 1959" which contains the following forceful statements which clearly reveal the mind of the revisers:

In the years of preparation and study, the principles which governed those who first gave the Church its Book of Common Prayer have been constantly borne in mind. The aim throughout has been to set forth an order which ...is agreeable with Holy Scripture and with the usage of the primitive Church. And always there has been the understanding that no alterations should be made which would involve or imply any change of doctrine of the Church as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer...

When the Bishops, Clergy, and Laity of the Church in Canada assembled for the first General Synod in 1893, they made a Solemn Declaration of the faith in which they met together. It is in that faith that this Book of Common Prayer is offered to the Church... (p.vii)

It is therefore fair to conclude that up until 1960 or so the Anglican Church of Canada officially continued to conform to the pattern established from the beginning. It saw itself committed to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture and to the "conservative principle" wherein the apostolic faith was to be retained, proclaimed and guarded by the Church. For generations the revision of the liturgy had been conducted within this framework and understanding. This was the Anglican way.

Based on what has been said so far one might be excused for assuming that when the ACC next faced calls for liturgical revision in the late seventies, a mere twenty years later, a similar set of principles would guide the process. However, one glance at the resulting Book of Alternative

Services, produced in 1985, is enough to convince anyone that, in many ways, it is radically discontinuous with any previous revision.

While most of its differences may have more to do with the form of worship rather than any substantive change in belief, such change is certainly not absent. Indeed, for the first time in Anglican history the authors of a new liturgy stated a desire to distance themselves from central aspects of the basic eucharistic theology expressed in the Book of Common Prayer (BAS pp. 178-9). Amazingly this doctrinal change was introduced without any debate or even justification, as if it was just a little adjustment with which any reasonable and informed person would naturally agree.

Instead of committing themselves to "...hold and maintain the Doctrine...as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same in the Book of Common Prayer..." they attempted to return to the use of the more "fluid images" which they perceived in "the biblical material", certain ancient liturgies and patristic theologies. At first glance this attempt to "go back" beyond the Reformation seems odd because, in the "Introduction", they stress the vast changes in the world since the sixteenth century which necessitate this new approach. With all this emphasis on "difference" perhaps it comes as no surprise that the BAS makes no effort to remind Anglicans of the Solemn Declaration or of the Preface which grace the front of the Book of Common Prayer.

Whatever the merits of these changes, for our purposes it is important only to note that they represent a significant new departure for the Anglican Church of Canada. For over four centuries the Church had been following one pattern of liturgical revision and then suddenly, seemingly out of the blue, it turned its back on its past and veered off in a completely new direction. As we have already seen, a mere thirty-three years after adopting these new principles the pace and magnitude of liturgical change continues to grow and are now seriously threatening our sense of unity and even of what it means to be an Anglican Christian. For good or bad, the face of the Church has been deeply altered.

While it must be acknowledged that the life of the Church consists in much more than its liturgy, there can also be no doubt that they are closely connected. Therefore, the pattern of change we have observed represents even more profound changes beneath the surface. Clearly something very dramatic has happened within the wider life of the Church to bring about the changes in the liturgy. How could an institution, after 450 years of steady development in one direction suddenly find itself going in another one altogether? How could a Church which was the very embodiment of what was often seen as stuffy uniformity become a laboratory for constant change within less than a generation? Understanding the answer to these questions may help point the way forward out of our present crisis.

In many ways what has happened to the Anglican Church of Canada can be compared to the so-called "Quiet Revolution" which has taken place in the Province of Quebec. For generations Quebec appeared to be a solidly monolithic society. The Roman Catholic Church was firmly in control of the culture. Religion permeated every aspect of the civilization, dominating almost every institution, including education and politics. But, behind the scenes and unnoticed by many, a "quiet revolution" was taking place.

Many Quebecers, especially among the intellectual elite, were abandoning the faith of their fathers and most of what it represented in favour of a secular nationalism. Even as recently as fifty years ago a casual observer could be excused for thinking that it was all as it had always been. Quebec gave every appearance of still being an old-world Catholic society. But behind the facade almost everything had changed. The new faith had largely supplanted the old and could not be contained within the confines of the old institutions which had unwittingly nourished it. The revolution, when it finally erupted in the early seventies, left a shriveled, shattered and dispirited Roman Catholic community in its wake. It seemed that it had lost Quebec almost overnight.

So it was in the Anglican Church of Canada. Although it presented an official traditional/orthodox face to the world, momentous changes were taking place behind the scenes. For over a hundred

years increasing numbers within its ruling elite had been educated in an approach to religion that was rooted in a rejection of the basic assumptions that had lain underneath the Christian theological framework for almost two millennia. Inevitably many came to accept this new way of thinking and as a result distanced themselves from the traditional understanding of the Faith.

For a variety of reasons, instead of simply leaving the Church as one might expect (now that they no longer accepted its official teaching), they saw themselves as merely reinterpreting the Faith in ways "acceptable to modern man". At the same time this approach to theology was itself subject to all kinds of schools of interpretation and thus its adherents were themselves divided about which new interpretation was correct.

What held them together at all was a common rejection of orthodoxy and its methodology plus an agreement that, in essence, Christian mission boiled down to pursuing one biblical theme: social justice. All of these developments were beneath the radar of most church members because the new theologies continued to use the traditional language of Faith but actually meant something entirely different by the old familiar words.

Given also the enormous self-confidence of official Anglicanism in the late nineteenth century (shared by the whole church of that age), and its tradition of tolerating differing theological views, it hardly seems surprising that little was done to confront these developments. More and more priests and bishops were educated by those of the newer persuasion. Certainly, by the late 1970's (and arguably much earlier than that) this new understanding had reached a kind of "critical mass" within the leadership, allowing its agenda to go increasingly mainstream. What might seem like a huge gap between the affirmation of traditional Anglicanism in 1959 and a self-conscious departure from that tradition in 1985 was really the logical outworking out of a process that had been going on for several generations. The "quiet revolution" was over.

What I have just described is a kind of "inner history" of the Anglican Church over the last hundred years and is necessarily full of generalities and sweeping statements. Nevertheless, I am

convinced that the picture painted is broadly true and can be verified by anyone who cares to investigate. In fact, I hope that this task will be taken up by professional church historians in order to provide us with a fuller picture. As far as I know there has been no scholarly attempt to write this kind of history of the Anglican Church of Canada. In order to understand these developments more fully it is necessary to explore the nature of this "new way of thinking" that has been introduced into the life of the Church.

The assumptions underlying the message and mission of the catholic church had to do with the nature and authority of the Bible as God's word written. Simply put, the church had always accepted the truth and accuracy of the Bible. If it claimed something had happened in a certain way, then that was in fact the way it happened. If it claimed something to be true, then it was true. For example, the Gospels clearly state that Our Lord was born of a virgin mother and therefore this fact was never seriously disputed within the church. Obviously, this acceptance of the truth of Scripture took place within a worldview that was open to the possibility of the miraculous. The entire theological structure of the catholic church was erected upon this foundation.

With the arrival of the so-called "Enlightenment" or "Age of Reason" in the 17th century this worldview came into serious question. Man had become the measure of all things. Human reason became the new authority and the rise of science with its many spectacular successes lent a great air of optimism to this new approach. The suffocating shrouds of "authority" and "tradition" were cast aside and man stood to his full height and surveyed his own domain.

One of the dominating philosophies that developed in this atmosphere was "empiricism", which held that knowledge could only be derived from sense experience. One of its implications was that, because we do not experience miracles in our day-to-day lives, they cannot, in fact, happen at all. This view corresponded to the newly emerging theory that nature functions according to certain unbreakable "laws". Since a miracle (like a virgin giving birth) would involve the breaking

of one of these laws it was automatically excluded from the realm of possibility. It just couldn't happen.

While this brief account is hardly adequate to the task, it can serve to highlight the basic pattern of our intellectual history. All that remains to be pointed out is that the new views came quickly to dominate the intellectual establishment of the Western world. In fact, it is only in the very recent past that such assumptions and theories have come under serious question, especially with the rise of the "new" physics and a rejection of the sterility of a worldview devoid of the mysterious. But for generations it was the faith that guided the dominant thinkers in our culture.

It is impossible to exaggerate the dimensions of the threat that these developments posed to the traditional/orthodox version of the Christian faith. If these new views were true, then the church had been misreading the Bible for over 1500 years. It would mean that its understanding of who Jesus actually was would have to be radically altered, if not abandoned altogether. No longer could he be born of a virgin, heal the sick, control natural elements, know the future, rise bodily from the dead nor rise up into heaven on a cloud as the Scriptures plainly taught. This in turn destroyed the idea of the Bible as the utterly reliable Word of God. And, as I have stressed, this assumption had underpinned the whole Christian theological enterprise, producing the common understanding expressed in The Apostles' Creed and The Nicene Creed that are affirmed in each Anglican service.

While the vast majority within the church simply continued, with varying degrees of tension, to hold to the old view of the Scriptures for a number of generations, there was an increasing number within her ranks who more or less came to accept what I am here calling "liberalism". Fundamentally, it involves the rejection of the traditional/orthodox assumptions regarding the nature and authority of Scripture. Desiring the right to be free to go wherever Reason and Conscience should lead, it seeks to encourage the church to change its positions in a "progressive" direction in order to meet the changed conditions in which it finds itself.

Once severed from those assumptions that underlay the traditional shape of the faith, liberalism has produced a bewildering variety of alternative versions of Christianity. This is more than a little curious given the promise inherent in adopting what was seen as a "scientific" methodology. One would think that having left behind the wrong methodology for the right one there would have been assured results. The opposite seems to be true. In fact, it is a commonplace observation that each generation of liberals has tended to advocate versions of the faith that on examination prove to be little more than Christianized expressions of a secular philosophy of their day. No longer tethered to Scripture, such theories float along on the prevailing breezes.

In line with this new approach, many sought to apply the principles of the new "historical criticism" to the Biblical record in an attempt to uncover the "Jesus of history". It was assumed that the latter would emerge from the layers of legend and misunderstanding evident in the Bible. Behind this assumption was another: the "real" Jesus, the Jesus of history, would be a man to whom we would be drawn and who would command our allegiance. If we could just get back to him and the "pure" Christianity that he taught, we would be in touch with the unadulterated essence of the Faith. In a way this was a version of the "conservative principle", the difference being that the church had always taught that the Jesus of history was the Jesus of the Bible and thus the aim was to get back to the Bible, the aim of the Reformation. Now the aim was, and still is, to get back to the Jesus who lay behind the Bible, a Jesus, that is, who would not offend modern sensibilities.

The 18th and 19th centuries produced what came to be known as the "Quest of the Historical Jesus". A number of "lives" of Jesus were written from the new perspective, each of them differing considerably from the other. This whole effort collapsed around the beginning of the last century after Albert Schweitzer astutely pointed out that each of these "real" Jesuses was made in the image of the author who tried to reconstruct him.

For a time this realization seemed to encourage a return to "biblical theology" but this did not endure. Instead there arose a very influential stream of thought that went the other way entirely

and insisted that the unknowable "Jesus of history" was irrelevant to authentic faith after all. Although this was a logical conclusion, given the inability of scholars actually to produce the historical Jesus, this theory was quickly judged to be in conflict with the stubbornly historical nature of Christianity. Therefore, in the early 1950's scholarship once again set off in another "Quest of the Historical Jesus". He has continued to prove extremely elusive.

This fact came clearly to the surface in the 1990's with the television programs, newspaper articles and magazine covers focused on the "Jesus Seminar".⁶ This is one of the few times that mainstream scholarship has surfaced in the popular media and it attracted a fair amount of attention. It brought together a large number of liberal New Testament scholars in an attempt to decide whether or not Jesus actually said the things the Bible reports him as saying. Each scholar voted on each "saying" by dropping a coloured bead into a box. If he thought that Jesus probably did say it or something like it, he would use a red bead, while if he thought the Lord probably never said it or anything like it, he would use a black one. Other colours stood for shades of probability in between. The result of the vote indicated that this particular group of scholars thought that only 18 percent of what the Bible attributes to Jesus was actually said by him.

While such a conclusion may seem shocking to the average lay person, at least that 18 per cent gives us a solid basis for our understanding of the real Jesus of history. Or does it? On closer inspection it is easy to see that it does no such thing. First of all, it is important to realize that not all of the scholars agreed on the authenticity of this 18 percent. Those were only the sayings which at least a simple majority of the scholars thought deserved a red bead. In other words, those sayings that made the grade might only be accepted as authentic by just over half of those voting. Those scholars who disagreed with the majority did not change their minds because they were in the minority! In spite of the impression that the Jesus Seminar manages to convey, its participants remain divided about even the tiny percentage judged to be really from Jesus himself.

⁶ c.f. "Can the New Jesus Save Us?" by C. Stephen Evans, *Books and Culture*, November/December 1995, pp. 3-8.

To add further to the uncertainty of these results we also need to recognize that if a different group of scholars with a different set of assumptions at a different moment in history had participated in the Jesus Seminar the results would have been different as well. A modern Albert Schweitzer might also observe that the Jesus which emerges from this endeavour manages to sound remarkably like what many of those scholars would like him to sound.

My point here is that the democratic procedure of the Jesus Seminar does not and indeed cannot render any truly reliable or consistent results. The same is true of all the basic methodologies of liberalism. Once liberated from having to accept all of Jesus' sayings as authentic (the traditional/orthodox view, the view of the "church"), scholars are free to pick and choose according to whatever criteria they deem helpful. They are obviously guided in their judgments by their own philosophical and ideological presumptions.

Furthermore, when one actually reads the efforts of these scholars one discovers that they are constantly building hypothesis upon hypothesis upon hypothesis. And, like building a house of cards, whatever they construct is regularly collapsing and being rebuilt. The result is something near chaos. The world of modern biblical scholarship is riddled by a bewildering variety of ideas, trends, schools of thought, nationalities, cultures, languages, Churches, philosophies, gurus, jealousies and rivalries. Just like any other human endeavour.

What we therefore discover is that no one picture of the teachings or person of Jesus emerges from the efforts of modern scholarship. There are only pictures. Using the same general methodology, scholars have come to opposite conclusions. For example, some suggest that Jesus was a kind of wandering Greek philosopher who challenged the prevailing social and cultural assumptions of his day while others highlight the more or less conventional Jewishness of who he was. Some see Jesus preaching that the end of the world is still in the near future, while others have him stressing the present reality of God's kingdom. Some hold that only the actions of Jesus can be known. Others claim the opposite, that only his sayings can be known. Some see him as

uninterested in the politics of the day while to others he was advocating a revolution against Roman oppression. The only sure conclusion we can draw is that this methodology produces no sure conclusions!

Not long ago many liberal scholars, having turned aside from supernaturalism, reinterpreted the Christian language of spirituality in terms of modern secular psychology. A few years ago, in a startling departure, but again following the secular culture, many embraced New Age spirituality. This can be described as a kind of generic supernaturalism in which angels, spirits, shamans, goddesses and witches are taken seriously and eagerly incorporated into "Christian" spirituality and worship. This approach seems to have been especially attractive to those inclined towards feminism. At the turn of the 20th century liberals were loudly proclaiming "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man". Now, at the turn of the 21st, in a strange kind of echo, one hears calls for "The Motherhood of God and the Sisterhood of Women"!

Here we note that the radical feminist agenda which has made itself felt in the "politically correct" movement which has swept across many of our secular university campuses has arrived at many of our seminaries. The efforts of this kind of feminist theology to remake the Church in its own image are nothing short of breathtaking. It is also increasingly straightforward about it. Because it is still very influential it is important that we gain some understanding of what direction it is going. The best way to do this is to examine the conference called "Re-Imagining" which took place in 1993. While this cannot be done in any detail here, it is important to realize that it took place under the auspices of the World Council of Churches initiative called "The Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-98" and received funding from a number of mainline denominations.

For our purposes we need only pay heed to the comments of Kwok Pui-Lan, a professor of theology at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. For some time liberals have been denying the superiority of Christianity over other faiths but Ms. Kwok proclaimed the superiority of Confucianism and Buddhism over Christianity! She also did away with the ideas of

sin and guilt. "O Jesus," she said, "who are you that reconciles us to God? Who is this funny God? Who needs to be reconciled with him?" She argued instead for multiple incarnations and reincarnations with Jesus being reincarnated in the endangered environment, specifically as a fig tree. All this from someone who is teaching "Christian" theology to Episcopal seminarians!

We are clearly in theological free-fall.

In spite of the lack of common results, mainstream scholars, many of whom teach at our seminaries, remain solidly committed to their basic worldview. Those who were part of the Jesus Seminar, for example, shared the conviction that the Gospels are "...narratives in which the memory of Jesus is embellished by mythic elements that express the church's faith in him, and by plausible fictions that enhance the telling of the gospel story for first century listeners who knew about divine men and miracle workers firsthand."⁷

These assumptions, or ones much like them, are commonplace in modern biblical scholarship. They are the rules by which the game is played. Even conservative and evangelical scholars (and, contrary to popular belief, there are many of them) who start from the traditional/orthodox understanding of Scripture have to couch their work in terms compatible with these rules. Otherwise they would gain no hearing at all. While there is no doubt that modern scholarship has contributed a great deal to our understanding of Biblical times and customs, its overall impact on the church has been nothing short of devastating.

Basically, what has happened is that several generations of prospective Anglican clergy have been plunged into the world of modern scholarship upon their arrival at our theological schools. At most of them many of their teachers have strongly advocated one or other of the above-described methodologies. (How these teachers ever got into and remained in these positions is a complex story beyond the scope of this book.) It is little wonder that many students emerge

⁷ Evans, "New Jesus", p. 3

from theological college not only with less confidence in the classic tenets of the faith than they had before, but also, for some, with a completely different understanding of the faith itself.

They are especially vulnerable to the pressure they encounter in seminary because their faith had already been under assault in the secular educational system. Now they discover that their teachers of theology share a similar set of assumptions to their counterparts in the university. For many this is no doubt a very liberating experience as they discover they can fully accept a “modern” worldview and at the same time remain in the church.

Their teachers of theology might tell them, for example, that of course one cannot accept the idea that a man could bodily rise from the dead. But that does not mean that you can no longer affirm a belief in the resurrection of Jesus. You can still do this by changing the meaning of the word "resurrection" to refer to the "rise of faith" which the early disciples experienced after the discouragement brought about by the death of Jesus. And so you do. After all, these respected, knowledgeable and authorized teachers of the church have encouraged you to go the way they have gone.

In fact, in many cases, theological educators have taken great efforts to attack and destroy the "Sunday School" faith of their students in order to replace it with something more sophisticated and congenial to the modern approach. They see this as a critical part of an agenda to make the church more relevant to modern people. It has reached the stage in most of our seminaries that it is fair to say that students who continue to hold to the traditional/orthodox positions of the Church do so despite their theological education. And for many of these, the experience has actually strengthened their convictions.

The bottom line is that we now have a Church in which even the common slogan that proclaims “Christ” as our unity cannot remain unqualified. The reality that we have many “Christs” as the objects of our faith. If your Christ is a political revolutionary and my Christ is a confused Messiah, or a feminist crusader, or the pre-existing Son of God who offered himself as an atoning sacrifice

for the sins of the world, what can we really have in common? To say that we all believe in “Christ”, without defining what we mean, is surely to beg the question. In our Church such statements simply must assume we have a shared understanding of who “Christ” is or that the fact that we mean quite different things by “Christ” doesn’t matter.

It was of first importance to Jesus. People need to have a correct understanding of who he is. At Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples who people thought he was.

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” (Mark 8:29-29)

Then Jesus went on to explain that he was to be rejected by the Jewish authorities, suffer, be killed, and then be raised in three days. Peter rebuked Jesus because his understanding of “Christ” did not include suffering, rejection and death. But to Jesus these were essential to who he was and what he came to do, and so he rebuked Peter in turn:

“Get behind me Satan!”, he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” (Mark 8:33)

Peter was right in calling Jesus “Christ”, but he had a false understanding of what that title meant and Jesus was not at all happy with his “interpretation”. Indeed, he saw Satan himself behind it! Perhaps I can be forgiven for my concern about the multiple contradictory understandings of “Christ” in the Church today and that the Church doesn’t appear to care.

This not to say than none of our theological educators, scholars or institutions uphold the faith of the Church. Some do. In fact, Wycliffe College, in Toronto, has made quite a little cottage industry out of being the exception to the rule, attracting many students beyond its natural evangelical Anglican constituency and, as a result, is thriving, at least in relative terms. These students come from all over Canada and from various shades of churchmanship in order to get a solid grounding in the Bible. There can be no doubt that its commitment to the centrality of the

Scriptures (the school's motto is "Verbum Domini Manet" or "The Word of the Lord Endures") has kept it also as a centre for traditional/orthodox faith in the Canadian Church.

However, the overall picture drawn in this section remains the normal experience for the majority of our theological students. The irony is that many of these students go on to be ordained and promise to uphold the doctrine of the Church, the same doctrine they have found under sustained attack in theological college. Those who have been converted by their professors find their new views to be no barrier to ordination as far as their bishops are concerned. The old requirement to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles has been quietly dropped. Ordination vows are now taken with the shared understanding that the Church is not going to hold candidates to the ordinary and commonly understood meaning of its basic doctrine. A kind of game is being played in which only a few of the spectators know that the rules have all been changed.

This attitude has made a significant contribution to the overall atmosphere within the Church. It has become entirely acceptable, for example, to lead worship with a thoroughly orthodox liturgy while at the same time being in active mental opposition to what it plainly proclaims. Naturally this has been done at substantial psychological cost and a number of rationalizations have been developed to help deal with the obvious tension. Some justify themselves by saying that they sing rather than say the Creed, on the grounds that this removes it to the realm of poetry and symbol. From this point of view its normal and literal sense can be transcended, allowing one to make it mean whatever they want it to mean. Others resort to the theory that there is a proper distinction to be made between what one stands for in public, as a representative of the Church, and what one privately believes as an individual.

There is little to recommend such justifications. If all the clergy bought into them it would, in theory at least, be possible to have a situation in which none of the Church's leaders believed in what the Church officially stood for! It is difficult not to see all these justifications as mental gymnastics designed to avoid the obvious charge of hypocrisy. Could such a thing be tolerated outside the walls of the Church? Imagine, for example, a Boy Scout leader admitting that he really

thought that outdoor camping was harmful to young people or held that children should not receive badges to acknowledge their accomplishments. The obvious question would be, "Why, then, are you in the Boy Scouts?" Indeed.

Given these circumstances, it is little wonder that tremendous pressure was building behind the scenes to do away with the old orthodox liturgy and move toward one that is more in line with modern beliefs. This is one of the main reasons why the BAS was so eagerly received by many bishops and clergy and why it seems so radically different than the BCP. Although the BAS represents a fairly modest shift toward modern theology, more by what it omits than by what it says, it really is the first time that such theology has broken surface in the denomination (unless, that is, one counts the "New Curriculum" for Sunday Schools in the 1960's). And, of course, it is also only a way-station on the road to much more radical change as various groups in the church press for liturgies that conform to what they already believe or do not believe anymore.

If anyone finds this account difficult to believe I simply invite him to have some frank conversations with persons who have been ordained in the ACC in the last forty years. Most of those who are close to the system are fully aware that many of our clergy, including bishops, no longer fully accept the traditional/orthodox Christian faith which the Church still officially proclaims. No wonder there is but silence when what used to be heresy is openly proclaimed. After all, who is able to cast the first stone?

Much of this came into dramatic focus for me when a colleague told me of an experience he had as a theological student when doing parish visits as part of his training. The rector had asked him to visit a retired Canadian bishop who had taken up residence in the parish. When my friend arrived, he found the elderly gentleman reading his Bible. As he did so, he was using his pen to cross out those portions with which he did not agree. While few knowledgeable people would be shocked by such a story nowadays, it is revealing to note that this episode took place in the 1950's! If we make the reasonable assumption that the bishop had come to his convictions during his theological education some forty years before we can see that the kind of behind-the-scenes

changes to which I have been referring were already well underway back in the early years of the last century. No wonder that by the 1970's the bubble was about to burst.

Liberalism, then, is by its very nature is forever changeable and it has been introduced into an institution which has stood for the same truths for almost two thousand years. This would be destabilizing all by itself, but the fact is that many within the Church have continued to espouse the traditional/orthodox position and have no intention of moving away from that commitment. They have tested modernity and found it wanting on many levels while the traditional understanding of the nature of the Bible has much to commend it. As long as the official facade of traditional/orthodox Christianity remained and as long as liberals were unwilling or unable to make any changes in official doctrine it was possible to retain some (increasingly false) sense of unity.

Liberalism, having already abandoned adherence to the Bible in matters of doctrine, is now pushing to do the same in matters of morals and practice and this, by the very nature of things, requires a more public face. After all, it is possible to doubt or reinterpret doctrine, like our retired bishop above, without anyone else necessarily knowing, or, worse, caring. It is only a matter of what one thinks. But changes in morality are much more visible, affecting behaviour or lifestyle.

For years liberalism has been content to share the Christian moral consensus which underlaid Western culture. Now, just as the culture has moved away from that consensus so theological liberalism, its child, desires to follow. Deriving its belief systems, not primarily from the Bible, but from some version of secular philosophy, so also has it turned from the morality of the Bible to the "situation ethics" which dominate the thought of the cultural elite.

Underlying both these shifts has been the conviction that there is no absolute truth. Liberals are well aware that they themselves hold a bewildering variety of theologies which are all open to change as the culture develops. In this context it is not proper to raise the question of which of these varieties might be the truth. Such a question betrays a lack of understanding of the

fundamental rules of the game. According to the latter, "All truth, is relative". Except, of course, for the truth of that last statement!

It must be said at this point that non-liberals most definitely do not share this conviction about truth. They continue to hold to the now out of fashion idea that when something is said to be true then its opposite must be said to be false. To them, along with vast majority of humanity both past and present, this is self-evident.

The idea of the relativity of all truth has only arisen among the cultural elite of European-based cultures. These cultures, now in the process of abandoning the Christian faith upon which they were founded, have been unable to agree on any viable alternative. This, along with a whole complex of other factors, has resulted in giving up on the whole idea of absolute truth. Although this view is beginning to show real signs of disintegration in the culture at large, liberals in the church continue to embrace it. To the liberal mind it is mere arrogance to assert that one has the truth, This sentiment is heard again and again in the Church, especially from those in leadership.

A recent example comes from Primate Michael Peers' address to the 1995 General Synod, when, in reference to Essentials 94, he said that he wanted "...to discourage a tendency to suggest that one group is right and another not, a tendency that moves into issues of power and talk about winners and losers rather than about brothers and sisters."⁸

Those who continue to hold to traditional/orthodox Christianity often find such statements non-sensical, intimidating and even self-serving. To them it just doesn't make any sense, for example, to affirm Jesus Christ to be the only Saviour without implying that other views are self-evidently wrong and even possibly un-Christian. Part of their goal is to point this out to their brothers and sisters whom they see as in serious error and in spiritual danger themselves not to mention a threat to the faith of the Church as a whole.

⁸ General Synod 1995 Report, p. 2

It is not so much a question of power as it is a question of truth. It makes perfect sense, if one is operating from the position that all “truths” are equal, to imagine that only by the exercise of some kind of power can one “truth” be said to be correct. However, if truth is something that can be arrived at through argument and evidence, as has been the assumption throughout human history (think courts of law), then it is not established through power but through the normal human means of so doing.

At the same time, conservatives may hear such statements by those enjoying high positions of authority as direct attempts to silence and disenfranchise them and deprive them of any voice within the denomination. The rules of the game seem to be framed in such a way as to try to keep them off the playing field altogether.⁹ Furthermore, the Primate speaks of power as if it is something none of us should seek while he and those who share his views occupy many of the seats of power in the denomination. One can be forgiven, perhaps, if, from this point of view, his comments might be heard as a little bit ironic.

This is not to imply that the Primate intended his remarks to have these effects. It is much more likely that he was simply unaware that anyone could react in this way. He wants to be open and inclusive, but he apparently cannot see that those within the Church who do not share his liberal assumptions actually end up being excluded by them. It is part of the burden of this book to show how this is so and that the inability to recognize this reality lies at the heart of the present crisis in which the Church finds itself. Gone are the days when we fought over such trivialities as whether or not to wear stoles or use candles on the altar. Our division is infinitely deeper, going to the very foundation of what we believe.

We now have within our ranks two different languages, two different ways of thinking and, in fact, two different and incompatible religions. Although this is a drastic conclusion to reach, it is,

⁹ For an example of how this works out in practice, please see my analysis of the *National Homosexual* [here](#).

I believe, the only one which accords with reality. I recognize that some will accuse me of causing division and even schism by saying this. But, in fact, the division is already painfully present.

Until both liberals and those in the traditional/orthodox camp recognize this fact they will continue to try to mix oil and water with increasingly frustrating results. Indeed, part of the sense of crisis is the fact that many on both sides are subconsciously aware of this truth but cannot bring themselves to admit it, let alone name it. It is just too monstrous an idea for good Anglicans to consider. It calls into question our history, our identity, our unity and, perhaps most importantly, our future. But that does not make it any less true. We must face the truth and deal with it. There is no other way out of the mess we are in. The truth will set us free.

CHAPTER FOUR

Coyotes Can't Fly: Basic Characteristics of the Liberal Religion

*For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.
Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great
number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will
turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

2 Timothy 4:3-4

Having traced the rise of the liberal religion, it is now necessary to examine more fully some of its specific theological characteristics in order to demonstrate its incompatibility with traditional/orthodox Christianity. In the next chapter I will show how each of the symptoms of the present crisis in the ACC is linked to the introduction of liberalism. Chapter Six will show how liberalism's embrace of the homosexual agenda is serving to bring to the surface the underlying division we have been exploring and creating a crisis situation. Chapter Seven will then demonstrate why General Synod 2019 will be a watershed moment for the Church and what its possible outcomes will be.

The previous chapter may have left the impression that I am saying that liberals always come to radical conclusions when they study the Bible. This is not so, of course. Many liberals are what we might call moderate critics who propose a picture of Jesus, for example, which is quite similar to that recognized by the traditional/orthodox mind. However, based upon their own assumptions, there is no way for these liberals to demonstrate that they are right and other, more radical critics, are wrong. Once the control of the text itself has been abandoned the only control left comes entirely from outside the text, ultimately the experience of the particular critic

or reader. There is no other source. Therefore, just as the human experience is infinitely variable, so are theologies of liberalism. This leads us directly to a consideration of its first characteristic.

Experience as Primary Authority

For liberals, "experience" has become a primary source of authority. Following a desire for a "scientific" theology, liberals used to imagine themselves to be champions of objectivity. But this is no longer the case. Now it is recognized by liberals themselves that it really is experience which is guiding their reading of the Bible. Instead of recognizing the obvious danger of such unbounded subjectivity, they have made a virtue out of a necessity by accepting experience as an authority superior even to Scripture, reason and tradition! Again and again one encounters statements such as "I know Scripture says that adultery is wrong, but it has been my experience that in fact adulterers are good people, no worse or no better than anybody else." This approach has been especially evident in the debate over homosexuality.

It is important to realize that the liberal, at least in his own mind, has not, in making this kind of statement, turned his back on the Bible. However, the Bible from which he draws his inspiration is a vastly different kind of Book than it has been to two millennia of Christians. To him it is a book that reflects the experience of Jewish people and early Christians as they encountered the Divine in their lives. It is to be honoured as the source of our particular tradition, but it need not be considered more inspired than the Koran or the Book of Mormon. Like all human efforts it is full of errors and contradictions. A product and outgrowth of a variety of many religions, cultures and philosophies, its authors portray widely differing views of God and how he relates to humanity.

Given this view of the nature of the Bible it makes perfect sense to pick and choose from among its teachings only those which are in accord with our own pre-understanding of the truth. Indeed, we are forced to do this if we expect to make any use of the Bible at all. It has become a smorgasbord from which we can select whatever appeals to us rather than a healthy multi-course

dinner carefully prepared and served up by a mother who expects us to eat what is set before us. Any teaching of the Bible that contradicts what I already consider good and true is just not acceptable. Instead of being subject to the Word of God, the Word of God is subject to us.

If, then, as liberals allege, the Bible is merely the uncertain record of one people's experience of God, then its authority is reduced dramatically. I say "merely" and "reduced", of course, because this is a big comedown for the Bible from its position in catholic Christianity. There it is considered to be the unique Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, all its parts fitting together into a coherent whole, superior to all other so-called revelations and thus the final authority on faith and practice. For almost two thousand years the church has been sustained and renewed in its doctrine and mission by allowing itself to be shaped again and again by the teaching of the Scriptures.

In the Anglican tradition this was, as we have noted, expressed as the Church being "under" the Bible. The fractured and ambivalent Bible of liberalism obviously cannot have such a role. Indeed, in the liberal world the very idea of being under any kind of authority is to be challenged. With this view what is needed is a means of picking one's way through the shattered remains of the Biblical tradition. Which bits and pieces of the Biblical tradition are authentic for modern people? Which speak to present reality?

It is clear that in the liberal system we have to make the necessary choices ourselves. And in this we are guided by our own experience of God within the context of the wider community of our fellow pilgrims. This is assumed to be the work of the Holy Spirit as he/she/it reveals God's direction for the new age.

Revelation, then, rather than being confined to the Bible as was previously believed, actually continues in the ongoing life of the church. This "revelation", like that of the Bible, is filled with ambiguity and is not absolute or final. But it is quite capable of calling the teaching of the Bible itself into question. In this sense the Bible is "under" the church. Thus, in order to discern God's

word for today one does not primarily look back to the Bible but around to the experience of the community of God's people and even, finally, ultimately, of one's self.

In this system the careful exposition of the Scriptures has been superseded by an attempt to "discern the mind of the Church". Sermons tend to stress what has happened in the life of the preacher, the community, or the world rather than upon the truth of God's written Word. The Sunday School curriculum which focused on "The Whole People of God" found a ready market. The model of the preacher in his pulpit and the congregation in their rows of pews is fast being replaced by that of the facilitator on his chair within the gathered circle of the encounter group. Here, everyone's experience is a valid experience.

This new "theology of experience" is commonly accepted and practiced throughout much of the Anglican Church of Canada. In the absence of any common body of beliefs, we have reached the point where if an Anglican holds an opinion then it must be accepted as a valid one. There is no agreed-upon mechanism to help us sort through such opinions. That would require clearly articulated and authorized doctrinal standards by which to measure them and, as we have seen, this is precisely what is impossible in today's Church.¹⁰

How then can the Church arbitrate between various opinions and experiences in trying to make up its common mind on particular issues? Asking this question will bring us face to face with one of the more serious implications of having adopted experience as the ultimate authority. The uncomfortable truth is that in such circumstances the only thing that really matters is power, raw political power.

That is, it becomes a question of whose opinions and experiences will guide the denomination in matters of doctrine. It cannot be a question of right or wrong for we no longer have any way of answering. Not only that but the liberal mind will not even acknowledge the validity of asking

¹⁰ See p.63, above.

such a question in the first place. All we are left with is power. Who within the denomination has the power to make their opinions count?

This question is complicated by the fact that the authority structure of the ACC suffers from a high degree of ambiguity. In large part this stems from the fact that a hierarchical model (archbishops, bishops, priests, deacons and laity) has been overlaid by a congregational/democratic model (congregations, vestries, diocesan synods and General Synod). The dynamics of the power relationship between these two sources of authority are very complex. They are interconnected in a number of ways. For example, synods elect bishops, but synods cannot make decisions without the concurrence of their bishops. However, it is probably fair to say that the real power centre of the denomination, as a whole, lies in General Synod.

Leaving aside the vexing question of who controls General Synod or sets its agenda, the simple truth is that major policy directions of the ACC must gain the approval of this body. It meets every three years and brings together all of the bishops as well as representatives of the clergy and laity from every diocese. In a very rough analogy it can be seen as the Parliament of the Church.

As a result, General Synod has become the focus and battleground for various interest groups who wish to influence the direction of the denomination. And there is no way to have any idea what direction that will be when you are in theological free-fall. No way at all. It only takes a voting majority in General Synod. There is no accepted truth against which its decisions can be measured. There is no effective Constitution or Supreme Court to which to appeal. The fact that a large majority of "the people of God" might not agree with General Synod is a moot point. They have no vote.

This last point is not quite true. Ordinary members of a parish have a vote at the Annual Meeting. Here they can have a say in who the parish sends to the diocesan synod, and those persons, in turn, have a vote in who that synod sends as delegates to General Synod. However, both at that level and the diocesan level, delegates are encouraged not see themselves as representatives of

those who sent them but as independent “members” of synod who vote according to their own conscience. Furthermore, politicking, or organizing into parties to vote in blocks, is heavily frowned upon, although it certainly goes on behind closed doors.

No system is perfect. One can only hope that the “mind of the Church” as expressed in General Synod is indeed the expression of the Holy Spirit. Our tradition, however, as we have seen¹¹, suggests extreme caution in making such an assumption. The point here is that General Synod is a long way from the pews and, in the absence of acknowledged authority, is a long way from being able to provide wise leadership in matters of doctrine.

Inclusion

Following from this emphasis on experience, the second basic characteristic of liberalism is its strong emphasis on inclusion. There is little doubt that this attitude arose originally out of a generosity of spirit nurtured within the womb of Anglican comprehensiveness. However, what used to be a way of expressing our diversity within a commitment to a common core of beliefs has now become something quite different. Liberals really seem to want to find a way to include everybody. Every experience is a valid experience. Every voice is a valid voice. Every opinion is a valid opinion. If you call yourself an Anglican Christian then you are an Anglican Christian, no matter what theology you might hold. We hear many calls for unity but are never told of what this unity consists other than our shared membership in the same institution. By this fact alone we are expected to consider each other's positions just as valid as our own.

It must be recognized that this undefined and hence unlimited inclusiveness is a completely novel idea in the history of the church. Not only is it novel, but it is completely contrary to both Scripture and tradition which strongly uphold the idea that there is a right and a wrong in matters of faith. Jesus in fact saved some of his harshest criticism for certain religious leaders of his day and warned his followers to disregard their teaching as that of the blind leading the blind. (Matthew

¹¹ See p.7, above.

15:14) He even went so far as to deny their claim to be children of God, saying instead they were of their father the devil! (John 8:42ff.) He also taught that the church would contain many tares among the wheat and that the former would come under eternal judgment. (Mathew 13:25ff.)

As far as our tradition is concerned, the Book of Common Prayer calls upon a bishop to "...banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word; and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to do the same." (p. 663) This is clearly a long way from the spirit of inclusion that has now entered the life of the Church. Some of its proponents have raised it to the level of absolute dogma. Much of the leadership of the Church has adopted it as a fundamental rule by which discussion proceeds. How did this happen? As we have seen it is certainly not part of our tradition or of our official positions.

It happened partly because inclusivism is a logical necessary condition to the free exercise of liberalism. The latter is, as we have seen, infinitely variable because it is based on a theological method which no longer has an anchor in the Holy Scriptures (or in any other authority besides experience). Not only does this result in liberal theologies succeeding one another over time as the culture evolves but also at any one time in the Church there will be a significant number of alternative liberal theologies, rooted as they are in the differing experiences of their proponents. To insist that any one of these was to be excluded would raise the problem of the basis for such an exclusion. It would imply that there was a canon or standard of some kind from which the excluded theology had departed.

Liberalism has long since discovered that its methodology is unable to produce such an agreed-upon doctrinal core. It therefore correctly regards any attempt to define such a core as a profound threat (c.f. Michael Peers' response to Essentials 94¹²). The underlying methodology of liberalism would have to be rejected in the process. Furthermore, if such a core were to be defined it would exclude any number of theologies and their followers who are now bona fide members of the liberal Anglican establishment. Add to this the likelihood that many liberals are

¹² See p.71, above.

well aware of their own personal departure from the official doctrinal positions of the denomination and you can begin to appreciate the attachment to the inclusivist dogma. Many are naturally very nervous about any possibility of the re-imposition of these positions because they themselves would be excluded. For these reasons, among others, liberalism demands inclusivism. It has no choice.

Before leaving this discussion of inclusivism it is necessary to touch on the serious effects of adopting such a position. Here I am referring to the almost self-evident truth that the insistence upon inclusivism has the effect of excluding those who still hold to the traditional/orthodox faith which underlies the official doctrines of the Church. These persons continue to insist that there are a number of basic doctrines which everyone in the Church should accept simply because it is difficult to see how anyone could claim to be a Christian while denying them. These doctrines literally define the faith, have always been part of the Anglican way, and cannot be surrendered or compromised. Now those who insist upon them are being routinely scolded by many in positions of power who claim that such "exclusivist" views are intolerant and unloving.

Non-liberals, it must be emphasized again, hear these pronouncements as attempts to marginalize and silence them. How can they be expected to feel genuinely included in the discussion when their basic defining conviction about the nature of Christian truth is excluded from the outset? The insistence upon inclusiveness clearly means that the results of the debate are determined in advance, at least to the extent that the traditional/orthodox position is forbidden to even suggest that other positions might be wrong. The rules of the game will not allow it.

Liberals, if they wish to be truly inclusive should drop this kind of intimidating language and be truly welcoming of all views. After all, as has been pointed out, the traditional/orthodox position is enshrined in the official doctrinal positions of the Church and it seems strange indeed that it is the one that is being frozen out. Strange, perhaps, but logically necessary. The truth is that inclusivists cannot include exclusivists and vice-versa because these concepts are totally

incompatible. Inclusivists cannot welcome the conviction that inclusivism is not right. The exclusivist cannot play by the inclusivist's rules. The former has set boundaries and will always be forced by this to make judgments about what views are inside the fence and which are not. She cannot accept all views and she especially cannot accept inclusivism. To do so she would have to exclude herself!¹³

Much of the difficulty in resolving the conflicts in the ACC stem from the inability of either side in the debate to face up to the implications of this reality. Liberals continue to make statements that they think are meant to invite the participation of all Anglicans but which in fact exclude and offend many. On the other hand, traditional/orthodox Anglicans continue to make statements which imply that their own desire for a defined core of "essentials" should be accepted in an institution whose leaders are generally committed to being inclusive. Such statements are instinctively and correctly seen as a threat to the basic belief system of liberals. Naturally they resist and even obstruct. It makes perfect sense. Once again, we are at an impasse. There is simply no way forward until both sides accept the fact that we are dealing with two different and incompatible religions. This is the truth that, if acknowledged, might set us free.

We are coming to understand that any common life requires a shared set of underlying values in order to survive. It has been my argument that this is absent in the ACC today. Liberalism has done little in the sacred or secular worlds to engender much confidence in its ability to establish and articulate such values. Indeed, secular liberals, such as Todd Gitlin in book, The Twilight of Common Dreams, seem to be waking up to this reality. There is a serious message in here for the Church.

Universalism

¹³ Many readers will recognize in this debate the same debate in the larger society. It has spilled over into the church because we are all breathing the same air. Anyone who has been to university or read a newspaper (even on-line!) in the last 25 years will know that "diversity" and "inclusion" are part of the ascendant culture (especially in academia) that in many ways is descending into chaos all around us. It is threatening to take with it those churches most invested in it.

A third basic characteristic of liberalism is universalism. This is the view that all humanity will eventually be "saved". In plain language it simply means that no one is going to go to hell or spend an eternity outside the presence of God. This belief often arises out of the conviction that a loving God would not, by definition, condemn anyone to everlasting punishment. Besides, such an old-fashioned view puts limits upon God's infinite love for the human race.

This opinion is so pervasive in the ACC that it is a genuine shock to hear anything else. This is in spite of the fact that it clearly contradicts the teaching of Jesus, the whole of the New Testament and the consistent teaching of the Church for two thousand years. There is no Biblical text which, interpreted in context, supports the concept of universalism. On the contrary, it doesn't take much reading of the Bible, the BCP or the BAS to see that the whole of our Faith is predicated on the truth that there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun.

Jesus tells us that when he comes in glory at the end of the age he himself, as the King, will be the Judge who decides the destiny of every person. The wicked "...will go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life." (Matt. 25:46) In a passage familiar to all Christians Jesus says:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18)

When we bring our children for baptism the priest reminds us that "...our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born anew of Water and the Holy Spirit." (BCP: p. 523) In the funeral liturgy of the BAS we pray "O worthy and eternal Judge, do not let the pains of death turn us away from you at our last hour." (p. 576) Against a background of universalism all this makes little, if any, sense. Rather, the possibility of eternal punishment is

part of the warp and woof of our whole liturgical life, from baptism to burial, from Advent to Christ the King. Again, and again we pray that we might be granted eternal life based upon the work of Christ. Why would we do this if we are all to be saved anyway?

The best minds the church ever produced spent themselves seeking to understand a faith which held to a God of both love and judgment. Their deep probings into this paradoxical mystery produced some of the richest veins of contemplation ever explored. Much of the classical Christian understanding of our "free will" and its relationship to the sovereignty of God arises out of this discussion. If the church had had the liberal perspective from the beginning it could have saved itself an awful lot of theological ink! A person could be driven to despair when contemplating the sheer volume of writing, the intensity of argument, the concentration of energy and the dedication of entire lives that have been wasted.

Driving all of this discussion and seeking was a conviction that the Bible was entirely true in its portrayal of God, and that there is great merit for the Christian in accepting and exploring this truth, even and especially when it appears contradictory. God, after all, is beyond human ability to fully comprehend.

The reasons that the traditional view has been rejected by liberals are clearly related to their basic theological method. Once you abandon the traditional/orthodox view of Scripture, thus permitting yourself to pick and choose from among the biblical data according to your experience, it is little wonder that the doctrine of eternal punishment is among those first to go. The human heart and mind naturally object to it. Surely, we tell ourselves, as the serpent suggested to Eve, God didn't really say that. Our concept of a loving God precludes such a notion. Once we no longer have to accept it simply because the Bible so clearly proclaims it, it becomes a definite non-starter.

Simply denying the reality of eternal judgment may seem to enhance the concept of a loving God but in fact it only creates significant problems for our understanding. For example, if all are

eventually saved then presumably human beings are not truly free after all. If no one is able to resist the love of God, then human dignity as free agents is called into serious question. In classical theology, human beings in the end have the ability to say "NO!" to God himself! Take this away and they are reduced to being something like puppets in the hands of an arbitrary God.

I say arbitrary because such a view has a serious problem explaining why human beings suffer at all. How can a God who will eventually override all resistance to his love and spare us the pain of judgment continue to simply stand by as we endure pain in *this* life? What reason could there be for his inaction? He has the power to override our sin, our mistakes and natural disasters. Just do it!

I am not suggesting that there are no liberal answers to these questions. It is just to say that they demonstrate that no system can avoid the complexities of trying to understand God and his ways. It seems such a simple and attractive thing to do away with the concept of judgment and hell, but if we do, the questions just move to another level. If we reject a God who could condemn someone to hell in the life to come, how can we accept a God who allows such real pain in this life? Can such a God be a God of love?

These questions suggest that the adoption of universalism has extremely serious implications for the whole of Christian theology. Certainly, it could be argued that it turns Jesus into a very unreliable guide to spiritual matters. How can we trust him about eternal life when he is so wrong about eternal death? If he is this unreliable how can we consider him to be the one and only Son of God? Of course, as we have already suggested and shall soon see in more detail, the liberal can simply deny that Jesus said these things in the first place.

Universalism also casts doubt on the need for the Cross as the act in which God the Son died for the sins of the world. Perhaps the Cross has some residual power as the ultimate expression of God's love, but this lessens its place in our Faith. Evangelism is no longer a call to repent and be saved but, if anything, an attempt to let people know the "good news" that they are already

saved. As a direct result the very essence of the Gospel is altered. The very idea of being saved by faith, or being saved at all, is without serious foundation.

There can be no doubt that universalism belongs to another belief system altogether than traditional/orthodox Christianity. Just tacking it on does not work. It is like trying to play a CD on your old record player. It just doesn't work. You have to purchase a completely different machine.

To press matters a bit further, universalism is a logical and even necessary extension of the inclusivism that marks liberalism. If being inclusive means that everyone who claims to be in the Church is in the Church, then universalism merely widens the circle to include everyone else. The final frontier has been reached.

Once liberalism lost confidence in the possibility of being able to agree on the content of the Gospel it began to realize that it would be logically inconsistent to exclude non-Christians from the kingdom. To do so would imply that such "outsiders" were in mortal error and as we have seen this is simply outside the rules of the game. According to them, again, truth is relative. No one is allowed to say that she is right and thus someone else is wrong (again, see Archbishop Peers' remarks¹⁴). For the same reasons that liberalism leads inevitably to inclusivism it also leads to universalism. It is a slippery slope.

It must be said that liberal revisions of the Christian message were all done with the best of intentions. There was a great desire to make the Gospel relevant and more acceptable to modern people. The great irony has been that this revised version of the Gospel has resulted in the Church being more and more marginalized by an uninterested public. How this is related to its inherent universalism was brought home to me in a simple but profound encounter.

I happened to be talking to a very devout Christian who had reluctantly left the Anglican Church for another denomination after many years of faithful service as a layreader (the kind of

¹⁴ Please see p.71, above.

conversation, by the way, all too familiar to those of us in local leadership). I asked him for his explanation of the fact that the church was so ineffective in recruiting people to its fold. He had a two-word answer: "Funeral sermons."

Startled, I asked for more. "Well," he said, "at my age I go to a lot of funerals and, from what I can gather from the sermons, everyone goes to heaven no matter what kind of life they lived or what they believed or did not believe. No mention is made of the possibility of judgment or of hell. It is no surprise to me that people don't see any need to go to church. If I believed those preachers, I wouldn't either!"

At first, I wanted to argue with him but he had a point. In fact, I have often pondered that conversation. As I have done so, I have been drawn to the conclusion that he is right. Think about it. It has certainly caused me to be more careful about what I say at funerals (but probably not careful enough!), one of the few times I have an attentive congregation composed of many unchurched people.

Underlying all these characteristics of liberalism is a view of human nature which is also contrary to the official teaching of the Church and its Scripture. I refer here to the proposition that human beings are basically good. As such they do not need to be changed so much as to be empowered to be themselves, casting off any restrictions.

Once again, we encounter the central theme of "liberation" found at every level of the liberal program: all the way from using counselling techniques in which individuals "get in touch with their true selves" to advocating social change through revolution as proposed by strands of "liberation theology".

This approach incorporates an optimistic view of human nature and denies not only the Fall, but also its corollary, the need for a Saviour. We don't need to be saved, changed or transformed because we ourselves are not intrinsically sinful. Sin is exterior to us, like a straight-jacket in which

we are bound. We need only be freed up to be our true selves. A careful reading of the Eucharistic Prayers in the Book of Alternative Services reveals that they uniformly reflect the view that Jesus came to set us free, not *from* our sin, but only from the power of sin.

This denial of the Fall is most evident in so-called "Creation" theology which begins with the affirmation that what God created is good and goes on from there to suggest that what we are deep inside is what God intended us to be.¹⁵ We only need to be set free from the distortions of our true self that have been imposed upon us by tradition or society.

Some liberal theologies are even talking about the divine which is inherent in us all. Getting in touch with it then becomes an essential part of our spirituality. We need not look to the Cross of Christ but within ourselves. In fact, we can, in a sense, save ourselves (even though such language is inappropriate because there is nothing objective to be saved from in such schemes except the very real consequences of our inauthentic choices).

The effect of this kind of reasoning within the life of the Church is most clearly seen, perhaps, in the debate over homosexuality. Many now conclude that because homosexuals are "born this way" then they are simply part of God's good creation. End of argument.

The Scripture, on the other hand, is abundantly clear that although God did pronounce the Creation "good" upon its completion, sin was subsequently introduced into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. This changed everything. Evil and wickedness entered our very souls. Jesus, in a breathtakingly casual manner, referred to his listeners as "evil" and taught that sinful deeds arose out of sinful hearts (Matt. 7:11, 15:19). In other words, we are sinful from the inside out, not the other way round. According to St. Paul all of those descended from Adam are "in Adam" and are subject to sin and death (Rom. 5:12). All of us are sinful by nature and, in fact, all have actually committed sinful acts as well.

¹⁵ Cf., Original Blessing [1983] by Matthew Fox

The whole structure of our salvation is erected upon this foundation. We need a Saviour. "While we were yet sinners", Paul tells us, "Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) We need some way to have our sin removed. Unable to do this ourselves, we recognize that it can only be done by an act of God's grace. This traditional/orthodox understanding is powerfully expressed in the Exhortation at the beginning of the Baptism service in the BCP:

Dearly beloved in Christ, seeing that God willeth all men to be saved from the fault and corruption of the nature which they inherit, as well as from the actual sins which they commit, and that our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born anew of Water and of the Holy Spirit, I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will grant to this Child that which by nature he cannot have: that he may be baptized with Water and the Holy Spirit, and received into Christ's holy Church, and be made a living member of the same. (p. 523)

All of the above elements of Christian faith are either explicitly rejected by liberals or implicitly contradicted by the logic of liberalism. It makes little sense to say these words while at the same time holding to universalism and the basic goodness of the human person. Again, we have come up against the familiar reality that liberalism and the traditional/orthodox theology of our official doctrinal standard are fundamentally incompatible, representing as they do, two different religions.

Some of my readers may feel that I have been dealing too much in generalities and theory in this chapter. There is some justification for this view. I have striven mightily (with some success, I might add) to avoid getting into personalities, finger-pointing, or "he said"-"she said" scenarios. Such approaches are ultimately unproductive and do need to be avoided.

At the same time, I am not merely shadow-boxing with the bogeyman of liberalism! Real people live by these ideas. I have stated on several occasions that many of them are in positions of authority in the Anglican Church of Canada. It would be irresponsible not to provide at least one

specific example of what I mean in order to put some flesh on my arguments and assure my readers that I have at least one foot in contact with the ground.

As it turns out, one of our most prominent bishops, Michael Ingham of New Westminster (Vancouver), now retired, provided an excellent case in point. In an address entitled "To Whom to Bow", the bishop deals with precisely the issues I have raised in the above argument.¹⁶ It is a clear and straightforward presentation of liberalism at work and is recommended reading for all Anglicans. We should all be grateful for Ingham's willingness, as a bishop, to speak out so clearly and forcefully on these matters. It is all too rare.

In his article Ingham defines "inclusivism" (which he claims he does not hold) as the conviction that while salvation is possible for non-Christians it is still somehow through Jesus Christ alone. That is, if a Muslim finds himself in heaven it is because of the work of Christ even though he did not know anything about it. All that is required is that he "hold sincerely to the path and desire of genuine knowledge of God in whatever way is open to him". (p. 8) If he does so, the salvation won by Christ is extended to him. He becomes a sort of honorary Christian. In this view Christianity remains the ultimate faith but its borders are extended to include all sincere believers of other faiths. (Of course, it also denies the integrity of those faiths.)

The "pluralist" position, which the bishop holds, goes rather further than this. It refuses to put Christianity above any other religion. All the "great religions of the world offer authentic pathways to God" (p. 8) in and of themselves. They have no explicit need of Christ or his salvation. Rather, all these religions have a way in which the individual can know the fullness of God. Seeing Jesus as divine is the Christian expression of this common theme. Other ways in other traditions are equally valid for their adherents. Christianity has nothing to offer that they don't already have. It may have something to offer those of no particular religion or "whose lives are set on a

¹⁶ A recent internet search fails to turn up a trace of this item. I am afraid the reader will just have to take my word for its contents at this point in time.

destructive path" (p. 9) but the bishop is vague as to who these people are and what the church can do for them beyond committing itself to peace and justice.

What Bishop Ingham really objects to is what he calls Christian Exclusivism. This is the traditional/orthodox view that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and that the church is under orders to present him as such to non-Christians. Ingham quotes a "speaker" at Essentials 94 (actually it was the world-renowned scholar and author J.I. Packer) to this effect: "We are obligated in practice to evangelize on the basis there is no salvation for anyone whom you encounter apart from faith in Christ." The bishop then refers to The Montreal Declaration of Anglican Essentials which declares Jesus to be "...the only Saviour; penitent faith in him is the only way of salvation" (from Article 4). Ingham then comments:

The basic problem with (Christian exclusivism) in my view is not so much its inherent bigotry, which is astonishing to anyone who has close friends among people with other faith traditions, or who has any exposure to the spiritual depth of other great world religions; the basic problem is its implicit doctrine of God...a God that is repugnant and abhorrent. That God should actually condemn everyone who is not joined to the church ...defies all moral sense and contradicts everything we know about God from the witness of Scripture and from the life of Jesus himself. (p. 7)

Some of my more conservative readers may feel like crying in frustration after reading this last sentence. You know perfectly well that it is the clear and straightforward "witness of Scripture" and of Jesus that the Bishop is rejecting. How can he make such a statement? It seems to be blindly stupid or even perverse, but it is neither.

What must keep in mind is that the liberal Bible is not the Bible we are familiar with. For Ingham and other liberals it is rather a smorgasbord from which one can, in their mind, legitimately reject some parts and accept others. Or perhaps it is better pictured as pot of stew from which each diner can select or reject various ingredients according to preference. In this fashion those who

only like carrots could in some sense claim to have eaten the "stew" even though they may have had only the carrots.

In this way any particular combination of accepted parts of the Bible can be called "the witness of Scripture". Those texts that might, in context, modify this witness are simply eliminated from consideration. Either they are directly removed by modern biblical criticism as inauthentic or they are radically re-interpreted. If you can throw out everything except the carrots, you then can enthusiastically eat the (altered) stew which remains.

This is exactly the process used by Bishop Ingham when asked how he can reconcile his position with what Jesus says in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Now anybody just reading that statement would have to say that it is a pretty exclusivist saying (not to say arrogant or even bigoted, according to liberal definitions!).

Ingham's first line of defense is to cast doubt on the "authenticity" of this quotation. "The issue here" he says, "is whether Jesus said those words at all." (p. 9) He goes on to present a scholarly theory which holds that these words were put into Jesus' mouth around the end of the first century by a "Johannine" Christian community. Under Jewish oppression their attitudes began to harden and they created a version of Jesus that is more compatible with their new absolutist views. Thus, the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John are especially suspect. As Bishop Ingham puts it, "The question is do they arise from the Johannine community or are they found on the lips of Jesus?" (p. 9) In other words, the Jesus of history did not really say these words and therefore they can be safely ignored.

But even if we insist on going against this scholarly opinion and accept the saying as authentic, there is a second line of defense. Here it is best to quote the Bishop more or less in full.

Then the question arises: 'What do they mean? ... to whom are the words addressed?' Remember that these words are spoken in context of conversation with Thomas ...who

says, 'Lord we do not know the way, show us the way.' And Jesus says, 'I am the way'. It could well be that Jesus is saying that 'no one of you comes to the father but by me'. But the church in its later years interpreted that as an absolute statement covering every human being on the face of the earth. Other ways of interpreting this statement could be this: if I were to say to you what is the way to Vancouver from Victoria: Well it's that way...its North and East. Is there one path to get there? No there are several paths from here to Vancouver, but there is one way. So it is possible, and the inclusivists would argue this, that Christ is present on every path because he is the way. And I think that is quite a supportable interpretation. (p. 9)

Putting aside the question of whether or not such an interpretation is really supportable, for us it is only important to note that it has the effect of turning a clearly exclusivist saying of Jesus into an inclusivist one. The obvious straightforward meaning of the text has been reversed and turned inside out. This, my friends, is the liberal Bible. It is putty in your hands. You can make it say whatever you want it to say.

The question then becomes "What do you want it to say?". In the case before us, Bishop Ingham wants it to say that sincere followers of world religions are included in God's salvation. Their way to heaven is just as valid as the Christian way. A straightforward reading of Scripture does not yield this doctrine. If it did all Christians would long ago have come to this position. But they did not.

As the quotation below demonstrates, Bishop Ingham is fully conscious of the fact that the Church has consistently proclaimed the opposite to be true for two millennia. That he pronounces such terrible judgment upon his own heritage raises many questions that go far beyond the scope of this book to address. What remains important for our discussion is to discover upon what basis he can so confidently set aside the great weight of biblical material which led the church to its exclusivist doctrine. What is it that has more authority than the very words of Scripture?

It is clearly what I have called "experience". As I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, liberals have replaced the authority of Scripture with the authority of experience. In Bishop Ingham's case he makes this quite clear himself. He tells us that he has personally had the privilege of having close friends who belong to other world religions and they are perfectly fine people who exhibit no need of salvation. He has also been exposed to the spiritual depth of their various faiths.

We have historically believed our religion to be superior to everyone else's. It is only in the modern world that we have come to regard with shame some of our own history. As we have come to live as modern people in Canada, side by side with people of other faith traditions, and have come to know them as colleagues and friends, it is only in recent times that this belief in Christian absolutism has been questioned by Christians themselves. (p. 7)

Having had these experiences, he feels free to characterize other Christians, who still hold to the traditional position of the Church, as bigots. And the long history of Christians, including the Apostles, evangelizing those of other faiths, something to be ashamed of. While such language is indeed unfortunate, it clearly reveals the depth of his conviction. What he has learned from "experience" is superior to what he has learned from the Bible as it has been handed down to us. Once having accepted this new doctrine, he tries to make the "Bible" of his own making agree. It turns out that he has brought his own can of peas and slipped them into the stew so that he can pick them out and enjoy them later.

Conclusion

Enough has now been said to support my contention that liberalism and traditional/orthodox Christianity are in fact two different and incompatible religions. The immediate question is not "Which religion is true?" but "How can they go on living together in the same institution?" They

are in conflict at every level, from basic assumptions to liturgical formulations. I recognize that it is a very serious matter to make such a claim. Therefore, some further explanation is still in order.

Certainly, from the point of view of liberals, the notion that they worship a different God must be at best puzzling and at worst inconceivable or offensive. But, from the point of view of traditional/orthodox Anglicans it is a valid and even necessary conclusion. It is extremely important for liberal Anglicans to understand this if they truly desire to listen to every voice in the Church. I certainly have no wish to offend anyone, least of all fellow Anglicans, but I am compelled to say this and to say it as clearly as I can because from where I and many fellow Anglicans sit, it is the simple truth.

Traditional/orthodox Anglicans, consistent with their assumptions, have no option but to see liberalism as a different religion. Liberalism, equally consistently, denies even the possibility of any such distinction. It is clear that the real problem is rooted in the differing assumptions that each side brings to the debate. This is at least part of the reason that we find it so difficult to talk to one another, to really listen to each other's voice. We recognize, even subconsciously, that our very right to exist is called into question by the position of our fellow Anglicans. No wonder we call each other bigots or heretics! This is harsh language, but it is nevertheless true language within each view. It exposes our fundamental division, a division that goes to the very heart of things, to the very purpose and mission of the church.

It makes little sense for liberals to talk about worshipping a different God or having a different religion. As I have pointed out, it is a fundamental liberal principle that all religions are, in fact, worshipping the same God even though they may well have radically different understandings of who he/she/it might be like. Religions are merely the codification and symbolic expression of a people's experience of God and no one of them can be said to be the only authentic one. Thus, Judaism is the result of the religious experience of Israel, Christianity, that of the followers of Jesus, Shamanism, that of indigenous Canadians, Hinduism, that of parts of the Indian

subcontinent, etc. These are all human attempts to grapple with the divine which is itself fundamentally beyond human thought and language.

Therefore, from the perspective of right and wrong it would seem that it is not an ultimately serious matter for a liberal to be charged with being a follower of a different religion than traditional/orthodox Christianity. For her this does not imply any real departure or “apostasy” at all. It is only a way of saying that different symbols are being used to represent the continuing (and necessarily unfolding, changing) understanding and experience of God in the community. To vision God differently, to attribute different characteristics to him/her/it than someone else does is necessary and healthy.

So if your God is a male monarch (i.e., a king) and mine is a pregnant female we are dealing with the same reality in different clothes. Both expressions are authentic and valid if they genuinely arise out of the experience of those that employ such symbols. That is the criterion. Within such a framework it is literally nonsensical to raise the possibility of worshipping other gods. There are no other gods in the objective sense. There are just different understandings and symbols of the same divine reality.

The only problem with this whole approach to religion, as we have seen, is that it stands opposed to the consistent witness of Holy Scripture taken as the unchanging Word of God and the teaching of the Church for 2000 years!

And God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.... You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. (Exodus 20: 1-3 & 7)

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2: 9-11)

Almighty God, who by thy blessed Apostle has taught us that there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Grant we beseech thee, that we may ever glory in this Name, and strive to make thy salvation known unto all mankind; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP, P. 320)

Between these two religions there can be no compromise. Perhaps these words of our Lord are relevant here:

No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment making the tear worse. (Matthew 9: 16)

There is one more point which still needs to be made yet again! I recognize that for the sake of clarity I have been forced to make abstractions from reality. This means that I have often had to make hard and fast distinctions in a world which does not lend itself readily to such analysis. There is no way to avoid this process, but it does have its dangers.

One of these, for me, has been that I may have left the impression that the Anglican Church of Canada is made of up of two distinct and easily identifiable camps: traditional/orthodox Christians on the one hand and liberals on the other. Such, of course, is not the case. Most of us are somewhere on a spectrum between these options, partly because we are confused and partly because we have not disciplined ourselves to consider the implications of some of the positions we adopt. Having had our anchor in Scripture severed during our theological studies, we each drift along until we reach a comfortable resting place to watch others either stopping in another location upriver or simply continue downstream past our location and out into the ocean. Whatever.

I recall a member of the clergy confessing to me that she could accept all the traditional doctrine of the Church with the exception of the Virgin Birth. This did not make her a non-Christian or call into question her salvation. But it did put her whole belief-system at serious risk. In this one area she had decided to put aside the teaching of Scripture. She gave no reason why she drew the line there and not at the bodily resurrection of our Lord (other than her own opinion on the "evidence"). If she were to apply consistently the same principles to the rest of the Bible, as many others have, she would undoubtedly change many of her convictions and fall more completely into the liberal camp. She could certainly not object to others coming to more radical conclusions than her own. It's just a matter of opinion and doesn't *really* matter.

The same situation applies to the creeping inclusion/universalism one finds extant in the Anglican Church. Many have enthusiastically embraced this theory without pausing to consider what it actually entails. They have no intention of changing their understanding of Jesus or of the Cross or of the mission of the Church. But, as I have tried to explain above, all of these doctrines and more are modified or even made redundant by a belief in universalism. Even though an individual can become a universalist and remain traditional/orthodox in the rest of his faith he is merely being inconsistent, a human failing we all share. Even me.

I like to call this the "Wile E. Coyote" principle. Most of us who grew up with television will recognize this aspect of serious theological reasoning. It comes from the "Roadrunner" cartoons, nearly all of which had Wile E. Coyote trying some harebrained scheme to catch the ever-elusive Roadrunner (Beep! Beep!). Usually, however, Wile E. is tricked by the speedy bird and finds himself going over the edge of the canyon. There he remains suspended for a moment or two, his feet still spinning, until the realization dawns on him that, no road beneath him, he is in serious trouble! Then gravity takes over. Down he goes, disappearing into a tiny dot down below! There is a satisfying THUD! when he finally hits bottom.

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So it is with traditional/orthodox Christians who adopt any of the principles of liberalism. For a while the rest of their belief system will remain intact. Eventually, however, gravity will take over. It always does. The difference between their fate and that of Wile E. is only this: for them there is no bottom to the canyon. They have fallen into the abyss.

CHAPTER FIVE

It's Liberalism, Eh!

He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

Luke 6:39

The last chapter explored the nature of liberalism, demonstrating that it is different from and opposed to the traditional/orthodox Christianity upon which the ACC was founded. The resulting confusion and confrontation lies at the heart of the malaise which afflicts the denomination. Indeed, it has led to a kind of stalemate as the two religions pull in opposite directions. This is bad enough, of course, but the problem is much deeper than a mere standoff between competing factions in the Church.

This chapter will revisit the various symptoms of the crisis that were examined in Chapter Two in order to show that liberalism in and of itself has had a generally negative effect on the life and witness of the Church. *The truth is that many of the aspects of the present crisis in the Church either find their origin in liberalism or have been made worse by its influence.*

It must be emphasized from the start, however, that I do not mean to imply that liberalism is the sole cause of our Anglican troubles - just the main one! Of course, we share in the general marginalization of the wider church experienced by all denominations. Of course, some of our decline, for example, must be laid at the feet of our unwillingness to engage our culture with serious evangelism and mission, our stubborn refusal to adapt our worship to contemporary realities and our preoccupation with the proper form of liturgy while at the same time neglecting the need for our worship to come from our hearts, not just from our words.

While these matters, and others, are serious indeed, they must remain secondary considerations when placed in the shadow of liberalism. In fact, we are being so shaken by the enormity of the present crisis that we will no longer be able to hold on so tenaciously to these all too typically Anglican attitudes. In this sense there is a silver lining in the clouds that surround us. But now it is necessary to fly into the eye of the storm itself.

Symptom 1: The Membership Blues (Reprise)

In Chapter Two I presented the bare fact that the ACC has experienced a precipitous drop in membership over the Sixty years or so. The loss of so many members has not been a pleasant or healthy experience for the Church. It has been a real and painful loss and, it is now important to realize, it has a real connection with liberalism. In order to understand this connection, it is necessary to probe deeper into the various ways in which Anglicans have slipped away.

Like every human organization, denominations experience a loss of fringe members as a part of its natural life. One of the saddest realities of parish life in the ACC, however, has been the steady exodus of some of our most involved and committed lay people. It parallels the infamous “brain drain” of our best and brightest Canadians down to the United States. Why are they leaving?

In the unfortunate absence of a more scientific investigation it is necessary to fall back on what is the common experience of many parish priests. When someone is leaving the Church, they will often seek to explain their actions to their pastor. This is a valuable if painful source of information. Another is conversations with the seemingly endless supply of former Anglicans who now belong to other denominations. All too many begin with “Oh, I grew up in the Anglican Church...” or “We used to go to St. John’s...”.

Many of these people make it clear that they are not leaving because they want to but because they feel they must. Call them the “reluctant orthodox”. They claim to have discerned trends in

our Church, especially at the national level, which they consider to be contrary to the Word of God. They have been disappointed with the inability or unwillingness of the leadership to proclaim clearly the Gospel in its traditional/orthodox shape.

They have also come to the critical conclusion that there really is no hope for change, no possibility that recent trends can be halted, let alone reversed. With much anguish of soul for themselves and great stress to their parishes they have quietly departed taking their energy, talents and money with them.

One of the greatest frustrations for those in local leadership is to see this happening and not be able to do anything about it. We agree with them that there are serious problems in our Church and we too feel powerless to effect change. However, for various reasons we have not come to the conclusion that leaving is the best solution. For us, the frustration at seeing them leave is much worse because our hopes for renewal and reformation diminish as fewer and fewer sympathetic people are left behind to carry on the struggle from within.

Former Anglicans continue to help populate the pews of those denominations that have remained unequivocally committed to the essentials of traditional/orthodox Christianity. Many of them express deep regret, missing especially the beauty of the liturgy and the life of the sacraments. Such sentiments, however, are not enough to make them change their minds. The slow march continues.

Of course, it continues as well into the new denomination known as the Anglican Network in Canada. There is no question at all that its *raison d'être* was the dominant theological liberalism of the ACC. Most started out as Anglicans and many were part of Anglican congregations that left the ACC reluctantly and with much anguish. Most had to give up their buildings and start from scratch. To say the Anglican establishment did and does not treat them with the love one would expect from their close brothers and sisters in Christ is perhaps an understatement. At the very least they are seen as deserters and schismatics. When the histories of this sad episode are

eventually written they may well show that the ACC was more concerned to keep its physical assets than to keep its parishioners or to ensure that the witness to the Gospel continues in the churches built by previous generations of Anglicans.

Jesus said that the sheep know the voice of the shepherd. The sheep "...follow him because they know his voice. But they will not follow a stranger: in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." (John 10:4-5) Is this the spiritual reality that lies behind the exodus of thousands of once-faithful Anglicans? Is the voice of liberalism a "stranger's" voice? Is this why so many have "run away"? This is the essence of the challenge presented to the Church by this type of leaver.

It needs to be said at this point that there is yet another class of departures. These are people who have become so discouraged about the state of the ACC at all levels that they have simply become inactive while not actually leaving for another denomination.

A number of these persons were traumatized at the end of the last century by the way in which the BAS was introduced into many parishes. Rightly or wrongly they feel that they were robbed of their way of worship, which, for many Anglicans, is a mortal wound. They have no comprehension of the reasons why the BAS was so eagerly received and the BCP so effectively sidelined.

Some of them even felt obligated to leave their home parishes and become wandering gypsies camping in another parish for a while until the BAS takes over there, necessitating yet another move. It is a trail of tears. Others, less determined or more discouraged, have kept up their membership in their local parish but almost never attend. To the extent that liberalism was behind not only the BAS but the way in which it was so eagerly introduced (even imposed), it must shoulder a major share of responsibility for these less visible departures.

While we are considering these questions, it might be worthwhile to ask ourselves “Where have all the young men gone?” In a church that is greying one expects a predominance of females because of basic demographics. But something else seems to be at work as well. For not only are older men absent but also there are relatively few younger men. In this area the ACC shares in the overall failure of the Christian church in our culture to attract males. But the suspicion remains that they are *especially* absent from our Church. This seems odd in an institution which has supposedly been molded by an exclusively male hierarchy. On the surface one would expect such an institution to attract men with ease. This is not the case.

One reason for the relative absence of younger men may be what might be called the feminization of the Church, a process that took place long before women were accepted into the ranks of the ordained. It is common knowledge that women have, in recent years at least, formed the backbone of the workers within the ACC.

For whatever reasons they are the ones who have rolled up their sleeves and done a great deal of the necessary work. Sometimes this was done through the Anglican Church Women (the saviour of many a parish budget) or through the official and unofficial offices open to them as lay persons. They have taught in the Sunday School, visited the sick, run the bazaars, served on vestries, become layreaders, chaired and staffed committees, gone to synods, done stints as wardens, etc. Without the enormous contribution of these women, the ACC would have had to fold up its tents long ago. But you won’t find much reference to them in the history books.

Why has this happened? If you listen to the women themselves one often hears the lament that they had to do this work because their men-folk refused to get involved. It is possible to argue that it is hardly any wonder such a female-dominated church (at least in the actual activities of lay people) would not be very appealing to most men. They don’t tend to show up at Tupperware parties either! But surely this begs the question. At some point, perhaps even within living memory, it is clear that the ACC became relatively unattractive to males in our culture.

Naturally this is a troubling development for an institution which is in such need of revitalization. It is a well-known fact among professional observers that if a father goes to church it is likely that his wife and family will too. Not only is this true, but there is a much greater probability that his children will also continue to be part of the church when they grow up. If it is only mother who goes to church, the reverse is true. Therefore, any church which appeals so predominately to the female gender will probably continue to decline. It will also find itself suffering further from fragmentation as modern families struggle for wholeness.

What has been the role of liberalism in this area? Without denying that there is a variety of reasons for the feminization of the church in general, the ACC has been particularly hard hit because of its current style of pastoral ministry. Even though the male gender was in control of the hierarchy, the denomination came to see the Christian faith in largely feminine categories. The fact that this development arose simultaneously with liberalism is, I would argue, no coincidence. In fact, with the loss of any need, desire or ability to evangelize (see especially “Of Decayed Evangelism”, p. 13ff, above.), much more of the work of the Church became focussed upon its own membership. Today the clergy are largely chaplains to those who attend.

Almost the entire emphasis in such ministry is put on pastoral care, the looking after one’s own instead of winning the world for Christ. We became an exclusively nurturing, caring, empathetic, accepting, loving, listening, non-judgmental, and affirming community. While there is much to be said in favour of most of these things, other more male-oriented aspects of the faith were downplayed. Any suggestion of aggression, even protective or progressive aggression (as in the use of military metaphors or in evangelism) became *verboden*. Anything that reeked of strength or dominance or victory was shunned. In this context, the introduction of female priests was a perfectly logical development. That God is being addressed in feminine similes and metaphors, with some even calling for goddess worship also comes as no surprise.

In the light of all this it seems reasonable to suggest that men became more and more alienated from an increasingly feminized church. Where could their maleness find expression and

acceptance? Where was there room for decisive bold leadership or for an all-out commitment to a great cause? Instead of being enrolled as soldiers in a very real battle against “the world, the flesh and the devil” (BCP) at baptism, now prayers are made that new Christians be given “an inquiring and discerning heart, a courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and love [the Lord] and the gift of joy and wonder in all [his] works” (BAS). This change may be symbolic of the problem.

While the liturgy was in the process of being “softened”, even feminists like the satirist Nancy White were discovering that “Daughters of Feminists” still wanted to play with Barbies. In spite of all the propaganda that would suggest otherwise, boys will be boys and girls will be girls. When a church fails to provide adequate psychic space for half of the human race, it can expect to be only half full.

Liberalism also effectively serves to cut off the Church from those movements which are proving effective in encouraging men to be active. Canadian Anglicanism seemed almost untouched, for example, by the Promise Keepers. Although this organization peaked in the mid-nineties and its function has been replaced largely by more local men-friendly approaches, it had considerable success in recruiting and encouraging men in the Christian faith.

Many liberals naturally (but questionably) saw Promise Keepers’ clear call for men to take their rightful and biblical role as leaders in the home and in the church as a call for a return to male domination. Jumping to this conclusion caused them to miss an opportunity to offer men a place to stand. Promise Keepers also, like most of these organizations, has a Statement of Faith which commits it to the traditional/orthodox Christian faith. This, too, makes it anathema to liberals. Thus, it seems that the ACC can only stand and watch as other churches see more of their men return to the pews.

While the categories of “leavers” already discussed can no doubt account for much of the membership decline in the ACC, there remains one more that may be more numerous than all

the others put together. These are those for whom the Church has simply become irrelevant. Again, it must be acknowledged that this fate is not unique to the Anglican Church. For a variety of reasons Canadian society has turned its back on institutional religion as a whole.

What needs not to be overlooked however, is the fact that those denominations which have continued to affirm clearly their commitment to the essentials of traditional/orthodox Christianity have in large part not been plagued by massive defections. Like the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada mentioned earlier, they have held their own or even grown some. There are, no doubt, many reasons why this is true. I would like to suggest a few which, in the context of this book, seem to me to be the most important.

First of all, by its very nature, liberalism cannot present a unified or easily understood message to those uninitiated into its mysteries. It constantly is morphing into different shapes as new theories take hold in scholarly circles. Traditional language and symbols are retained while at the same time their meaning is in constant flux. Trying to decipher what is really being said is like trying to guess where the pea is in a kind of theological shell game. And then the pea turns out to be a lot like other societal messages.

As a result, liberalism is much better at telling us what it rejects than what it affirms. It is caught in a web of confusion due to its tendency to be in constant change and its inability to use straightforward language in explaining itself. For these reasons at least, it is extremely difficult to win or retain the allegiance of many ordinary people. Presumably it would attract some people who considered themselves spiritual in one way or another and who were already committed to a left-liberal political agenda. But this is a relatively shallow pool in which to fish.

However, there is a deeper problem. As we saw in the previous chapter, at the heart of liberalism are its basic principles of the ultimate authority of experience, of universalism and of inclusivism. For most people this boils down to one simple “truth”: in the long run it does not matter what one believes. Whether you are a Christian or a Muslim or an atheist we are headed for the same

destination. The God who is love will embrace us all. Where here is the incentive to go to a meeting every week and give up a good percentage of one's income to boot? Where here is a great cause worth sacrifice and effort? With so many other demands upon a person's time and energy and without the encouragement of a society in which going to church is the thing to do, it is little wonder that so many have walked away from the Church. Who can blame them?

This brings us to a final irony. Liberalism began as an attempt to adjust the teaching and practice of the church to fit in with modern thinking. This was done in order to save the church from itself, from continuing to present a hopelessly outdated message to a culture committed to the new ideas of science and technology. As a number of observers have noted, however, as the faith was reshaped in order to be acceptable to current thinking, it began to look more and more like that thinking itself, dressed up in spiritual language.

This is hardly surprising because in adopting secularist assumptions liberalism had already committed itself to a secularized version of Christianity. Many people began to notice that the message of the liberal church was largely a baptized echo of certain strains within secular society coming exclusively from the cultural and academic elite to begin with. Even if one agreed with this message, it was easily seen that church membership might be redundant. Why go to church when basically the same message was being proclaimed from many different sources? On the other hand, to the extent that they were opposed to the musings of the cultural and academic elite, they would find church irritating at best and offensive at worst. Why go to church under these conditions? Why indeed?

And so we come face to face with what is perhaps the only really hard statistical fact that we have in this whole discussion: *whenever liberalism has become dominant in a denomination (i.e. the so-called "mainline" denominations) there is always serious numerical decline*. This is a universal truth across cultures, languages and nationalities. It is an observable fact, chronicled by many. One of the recent authors to do so in detail is Thomas C. Reeves in his 1996 book *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity*.

The opposite also holds true: *whenever liberalism has not gained a serious foothold in a denomination (i.e. the evangelical denominations and in Eastern Orthodoxy)* such numerical decline has not taken place. Canadian Anglicans need to be aware that the Anglican Church in the Two-Thirds World, such as Africa and South America, is experiencing significant growth. It is no coincidence that these Anglicans are largely untouched by liberalism. The conclusion, then, is as obvious as it is irrefutable:

Liberalism is a major cause of membership loss. It goes hand in hand with decline. It is that simple. We might debate why this is so, but there is no debating that it is so.

And so they have left. They have left with many others and for many reasons. It must be appreciated that all these leavings have not left unaffected those parishioners who do remain active. Most of our parishes are quite small and when key people leave or drop out the burden falls on fewer and fewer shoulders. Besides, those who have left are people they know and love. They are friends and often even family. When one suffers, all suffer. Naturally this has had a profound negative effect on general morale. Much more serious in some parts of the Church than in others, it is impossible to gauge the way in which this might impact upon any movement towards reform.

There is thus what might be called a "culture of leaving" within the Anglican Church. This is different from what some have called the "circulation of the saints" which some other denominations experience. The latter have people coming and going all the time and some of their growth is attributable to the patterns of this movement among the already converted. Unfortunately, Anglicans generally live on a one-way street. People leave by the back door all right, but they are failing to come in the front door at anywhere near the same pace.

But if anyone is still looking for the major reason why all of this has happened to their beloved Church, the short answer is: "It's liberalism, eh!".

Symptom 2: Of Decayed Evangelism (Reprise)

The discussion of this topic in Chapter Two noted that the Anglican Church of Canada, just when it needed to evangelize in order even to survive, seemed unwilling or unable to move much beyond talking about this aspect of the faith.¹⁷ What follows will demonstrate that the major reason for this dilemma is the heavy influence of liberalism within the denomination. This can be seen most clearly through a discussion of evangelism in the context of the mission of the church.

Since its inception and until very recently, the church has seen its overall mission in terms of extending the kingdom of God to the whole of creation (at least in principle). This was to be done, in part, in and through obedience to Christ's great commission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matt.28:19-20)

This is an unambiguous command to bring all persons to Christ out of all the peoples, races, cultures and religions of the world. It, in turn, is based on the clear biblical teaching that any person who is not a believer in Jesus Christ is "condemned already" (John 3:18) and needs to be converted in order to enter the kingdom of God. Eternal life will be granted only to those who repent and put their trust in Jesus Christ alone. Jesus himself made this astonishing claim: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

According to the witness of the Bible, we find the early church busily engaged in this project from the very beginning, first among the Jews and then among the pagans of the day. It recognized that to come to Christ meant to reject any other way of salvation. Ever since, the church has taken this as a given even if, for various reasons, it did not always act as if it did and made serious mistakes along the way.

¹⁷ See above, p.13ff.

England was one of the pagan countries evangelized and eventually converted to Christianity. This is an essential part of our history, sharing as we do in the developments since that time within the Church of England. Indeed, the history of Canada itself was shaped by this impulse as first French Catholic missionaries accompanied the earliest European explorers and then the English arrived along with their missionaries from the Church of England. This became part of the great missionary movement of the nineteenth century. While it is true that there was much left to be desired in the ways in which this enterprise was carried out, it was all done in response to Christ's unambiguous command.

While all of this was taking place on the ground, by the end of the 19th C. liberalism was gaining adherents among the leadership of the church and this has led to radical change on the mission front. The problem is that the basic principles of liberalism are in serious conflict with the evangelistic emphasis of traditional mission activity. These principles arise out of a new approach to Scripture which has led to a multiplicity of views as to who Jesus is and what it means to follow him. From this perspective the Church does not have a single Christ to present to the non-Christian. To whom are they to convert? This core of uncertainty at the heart of liberalism made a significant contribution to its early loss of interest in the older forms of missionary work.

This is more clearly seen when we remember that universalism and inclusivity are two of the central principles of liberalism. These principles stand fundamentally opposed to evangelism. The inner logic of the latter is clear enough: unless a person comes to explicit faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour she cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, out of love for humanity and in obedience to its Lord, the Church must be engaged in the business of trying to bring as many as possible to the faith. How could it do anything less?

But when you believe that no one is ultimately outside the kingdom and that all will be saved then what is the point of engaging in evangelism? Indeed, you may be opposed to evangelism on the grounds that it is arrogant and imperialistic.

The bottom line is that liberalism and evangelism are, along with the two religions they represent, mutually exclusive in principle and in practice.

Ingham's characterization of the evangelization of those who belong to other religions as bigotry shows just how true this conclusion really is. He is only being consistent.

When we turn to the history of missions in the last hundred years we can see how this incompatibility has actually worked itself out in the life of the Church as the new religion entered its bloodstream. Liberals did not abandon mission as one might expect. However, as they often did with traditional concepts, they redefined it. In this case it is, perhaps, more true to say they refined and narrowed it.

In the nineteenth century many of those most concerned with evangelization were at the same time developing a strong social conscience, seeing the need for the reform of societal structures in order to alleviate suffering and injustice. Liberals found themselves attracted to this aspect of mission partly because it did not seem to require a supernaturalist view of reality. It was focussed on the here and now instead of the possibilities of heaven and hell. Heaven and hell were made irrelevant, in effect, by the acceptance, in practice if not in theory, of universalism.

In fact, while all this was taking place around the turn of the century, liberals also were proclaiming the dogma of "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man". While this slogan may look like a commonly accepted truth to most Christians, it is now clear that its proponents at the time meant it as an expression of universalism. Rather than meaning only that every human being was the special creation of the Almighty in his image and thus a respected and equal part of the human family (a Biblical concept), it also embodied the idea that this fact automatically qualified them as being in a proper relationship with him. This fit hand in glove with the new way of defining mission as what became known as the "social gospel".

This development marked a shift towards seeing Christian mission predominately in terms of social justice. The incoming of the Kingdom of God was to be accomplished through changing social structures. To this enterprise liberals have brought a profound and admirable commitment. It helped that liberals of all stripes, and even conservatives, here find common ground. For one thing a common view of Jesus is not a necessary part of the agenda. There is no real need to talk about him very much at all except perhaps as a great teacher and example of how we are all to live. The message was not really about him. Instead it was about bricks and mortar, about politics and economics, about social sin rather than personal sin. This message found particular resonance, not so much with the teaching of Jesus, but with certain clear strains in the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

There is no doubt that the whole church owes a great debt to liberalism due to the way it has raised our consciousness in reference to social justice. The consistency and persistence exhibited in pursuing this goal have been remarkable if not inspirational. However, it also needs to be said that wherever this approach to mission came to dominate, as it eventually did in the leadership of the ACC and much of mainstream Christianity in North America, the missionary zeal which had characterized the previous period of church history was quickly extinguished.

Odd as it may seem today it was this zeal that lay behind the very formation of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in 1893. It was partly a concern to facilitate the support of the missionary work in the North that originally motivated the Canadian dioceses to come together. The Church also had its own very active Missionary Society for years, but this is no longer the case. The Society was upheld by the laudable efforts of its Women's Auxiliary, the old W.A. The latter has been replaced by the Anglican Church Women. In spite of this less focussed title many ACW groups continue to be missionary minded. It is also significant that the Special Service for Missions, with its explicit prayers for the "evangelizing of the world" and the conversion of "the heathen", was removed from the Prayer Book in the revision of 1959.

Today a search of the programs of the ACC on its website fails to reveal any remnant of its Department of World Mission. No doubt some of its former functions have been farmed out to other departments or programs. Suffice it to say that missionaries, in the sense of those sent out to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have had little or no opportunity to hear it before, are simply not part of the Church's official program any longer. This is not to say that there is nothing good being accomplished in terms of our work with our overseas partners through the National Church, but the focus has shifted to short-term mission largely to do with the social gospel rather than winning the lost for Christ.

Of course, there still happen to be many thousands of Anglicans who vigorously disagree with and are deeply offended by the marginalization of evangelism. To them the conversion of non-Christians is at the very heart of the Gospel and cannot be excluded without the denial of that Gospel and the love of God that is behind it. It is impossible to overstate their dismay when they realize that world evangelization, which they believe is the only real hope for humanity and a main reason for the existence of the church, is simply not a priority within the official structures of their own denomination.

They are understandably alienated from the narrowly focused mission of the National Church and find themselves supporting other outside mission agencies, such as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, who still make evangelism a priority. This pattern, however lamentable, is inevitable when two incompatible faiths share the same institution. If National Church bureaucrats as well as bishops are frustrated by the reluctance of many Anglicans to support mission through the official channels they can find a good part of the reason right here: the two religions have two differing concepts of mission. This is how deep our division runs.

This is why I speak "of decayed evangelism" in the Anglican Church of Canada. It is not that no evangelism, as traditionally defined, is being done in the Anglican Church of Canada, but it is only being done by those of traditional/orthodox faith. Some parishes have enjoyed at least modest success in this area, especially those with a ministry to university students.

There certainly remains much to be learned and applied in this area among those who identify themselves as evangelical Anglicans. While they have the theology needed for evangelism they have not been doing a very good job, mostly because they have been preoccupied with secondary matters. If some have hoped that evangelical Anglicans would act as a kind of recruiting agency for the rest of the Church, they have been generally disappointed. The whole Church needs to be mobilized for this task.

Clearly this will not be done as long as liberalism dominates the power structures of the denomination. Not surprisingly, the call of Lambeth to be engaged in "the primary task" of the Church in the Decade of Evangelism fell on deaf ears here in Canada. Instead, the official Church shows every sign of regarding evangelism, the only remaining way for it to increase its membership, as something embarrassing or even abhorrent. Not a good sign.

Symptom 3: The Falling Dollar (Reprise)

There are a number of ways in which the present and impending financial crisis in the Anglican Church of Canada can be linked to liberalism.

We have already seen that the membership decline in the denomination can be attributed in significant measure to liberalism. Fewer people means less money. Beyond this rather simple but all too accurate equation, some of the specific reasons for the membership decline help to explain the financial situation. The same reasons that have led persons to leave the Church also have dulled the motivation to give among many of those who are left.

Those who are traditional/orthodox Anglicans will have a general unease about the direction the Church has been going. Liberalism's universalistic message lacks a note of urgency and even causes many to question its relevance. They can easily find other outside agencies who share their "old-fashioned" understanding of the Gospel. To these explanations one must add the fact

that the aging membership (attributable in part to liberalism) contains many who are on fixed incomes and simply cannot increase their support.

Another major way in which liberalism has contributed to the financial woes of the Church is the fact that its general attitude to the authority of Scripture has effectively cut it off from an idea that arises out of the Bible: tithing. Because liberals have sent the clear message that the Bible is not a reliable guide after all, when attempts are made to promote the biblical tithe of 10% of income (or the "modern" tithe of 5%) one can be excused for wondering why this particular teaching of the Bible is so enthusiastically endorsed by those in Church leadership. One might even be tempted to ascribe the real motive, not to a desire to promote a biblical lifestyle, but to the fact that Church officials know that if Anglicans did begin to tithe, their budget troubles would be over and none of their programs would be threatened. It should be noted, as a simple observable fact, that Christians who live in a denominational atmosphere that upholds the traditional/orthodox view of the Scriptures as the Word of God have a much greater tendency to give more than those who do not.

Finally, reference must be made to what may be the most compelling reason to link liberalism to the falling dollar. In a day when there is increasing competition for the charitable dollar people must be highly motivated to give to a particular cause. Earlier, in Chapter Two, I explored the ways in which a serious division has developed between laity and the clergy elite of the Anglican Church of Canada.¹⁸ This has resulted at the very least in a serious communications problem and at most a sense of alienation from the leadership. Certainly, there is widespread disinterest. In such a context it would only be natural to expect lukewarm financial support for programs perceived as coming down from on high. As the editor of the Anglican Journal put it:

Cynicism and a distrust of authority are blamed for much of the reluctance at the grassroots level to contribute to the national church's coffers. And this reluctance is taking place at a time when the national church is being asked to do more with less. (Feb. 1996)

¹⁸ See above, p.34ff.

To some extent this "cynicism and distrust of authority" is just the product of our time. Look at modern politics, for example. However, I would suggest that the elitism evident in the Anglican Church makes this problem even worse in our pews. This elitism, as I will shortly argue, is, to a significant degree a direct product of liberalism and it must itself bear a large part of the responsibility for our current financial crisis.¹⁹ The people are just not buying what liberalism is selling.

Symptom 4: Indecent Disorder (Reprise)

We must now return to those indications of considerable confusion in the life of the Anglican Church of Canada in order to show that much of this "indecent disorder" can be linked to the new religion of liberalism.

As we saw under this title in Chapter Two, the Anglican Church of Canada has, since the arrival of the liturgical renewal movement, moved into a time of relative liturgical flux.²⁰ This has resulted in a radically altered ecclesiastical landscape, a territory unfamiliar to most Anglicans and even unnerving to some. It is now our task to see how much all of this is due to liberalism.

It must be said at the outset that the call for liturgical revision itself cannot be blamed directly on liberalism. Although many Anglicans appear to have forgotten this fact, the Prayer Book itself arose out of a deep conviction of the English reformers that worship was to be conducted "...in such a tongue as the people understandeth." (Article XXIV) While at the time this was directed at the Latin mass, the principle remains that for Anglicans worship must be in the language of the worshipper. This leads inevitably to a second principle: because language changes over time and place it is necessary for liturgy to be revised in order to reflect this reality. As the Preface to the revision of 1662 puts it:

¹⁹ See below, p.123

²⁰ See above, p.20 ff.

...it is reasonable, that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those that are in place of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient. (BCP, p. 719)

If you have difficulty understanding this passage that is because it was written in the English of that time and reflects a vocabulary, phrasing and structure that is much different than ours. The liturgy produced in that era, the Book of Common Prayer, was a "contemporary" liturgy. It simply speaks the language of the day. It is certain that the Reformers would have been surprised to discover that their spiritual descendants were still worshipping in this language three hundred years later, given that English itself had changed considerably over that time. So it is a good and Anglican thing to revise liturgy, especially with a view to ensuring that worship is conducted in a language that is fully understood by the people.

In this sense, therefore, the desire for contemporary rites is part of our heritage, even if it had been seriously neglected for a time. While this authenticates part of what has happened over the last thirty years, it fails to explain why the Canadian Church has moved away from the tradition of "common prayer". It is one thing to insist on worshipping in contemporary language; it is quite another to endorse or at least permit an endless multiplying of liturgies for various communities within the Church. This moves us beyond mere language and into the realm of theology and here we find, not surprisingly, that liberalism is at the centre of this development.

The problem is that liberalism cannot be contained in any one liturgy. Just as it is by nature forever changing and without boundaries so also is its liturgical expression. Liberalism's tendency towards fragmentation was explored in Chapter Three.²¹ It was pointed out there as well that the 1985 Book of Alternative Services (BAS), although in form dramatically different than the Book of Common Prayer, was, in reality, a moderately liberal revision from the theological point of view.

²¹ See above, p.61 ff.

However, it was soon in need of supplementing as liberalism continued to spin off in various directions and its newer variations experimented with liturgies which more fully reflected these trends. In this context the ideal of common prayer, in the sense of a shared liturgy throughout the Church, became obsolete.

To be specific, the liberal elite soon began to reflect the cultural relativism (inclusivity), radical feminism, and pro-gay agenda of its secular counterpart. As it did, many within it found the BAS, not to mention the largely bypassed BCP, hopelessly out of date. Given an atmosphere which encouraged liturgical innovation, it wasn't long before experimentation was in progress on each of these fronts, and more.

At a clergy conference in central Canada the participants confessed themselves believers in "...God, Mother-Father spirit". This same "creed", in what was supposed to be a Christian service, does not mention any belief in Jesus Christ, let alone the Trinity. A liturgy used at a private school in eastern Canada simply omitted the Creed and the Gloria and refused to pray in the name of Jesus Christ at all. In fact, the only reference to Jesus was in the Eucharistic prayer itself where he apparently is still unavoidable. From this perspective the BAS is obviously much too traditional and increasingly inappropriate.

Those communities within the Church that have arrived at these new understandings of the faith are naturally demanding, and in some cases exercising, the right to worship as they see fit. Liberalism, as part of its commitment to cultural diversity, cannot but agree to these demands. It seeks to promote the idea that each distinctive group within society should be able to set its own agenda free of the imposition of the values of the larger society. So liberalism, largely because of its inability to set boundaries, creates both a multiplicity of liturgies and the atmosphere that actively welcomes these developments. It therefore comes as no surprise that General Synod agreed to the production of supplementary eucharistic rites for feminists, evangelicals, indigenous Canadians and other groups. This is just cultural diversity. It can never lead to common prayer.

Those evangelicals who, in resisting the BAS, insisted on composing contemporary liturgies for their own parochial use have also contributed to the demise of common prayer. However, they did not start out in this direction. If the compilers of the BAS had been willing to make a few key changes and include in the book at least one eucharistic prayer (out of six) that clearly reflected a Prayer Book theology, things would probably have been different. In spite of much petitioning from the evangelical side of the Church, this was not done and some, at least, resorted to doing their own thing. They felt, not for the first time, excluded by the liberal church. Not having another option, it was every man for himself. Ironically, if they had been included from the start they undoubtedly would have been content with the BAS and would now be its staunchest defenders! Certainly, in the light of what liberals were soon doing, the changes evangelicals (and others) requested regarding the BAS were moderate indeed. But not deemed in the right direction.

Liberalism, then, is the real driving force behind the current proliferation of experimental liturgies. Because liberalism is forever fragmenting in a process that knows no boundaries, so also is the liturgical innovation it has spawned. Liberalism brings division, always and everywhere. It has bequeathed to us the era of uncommon prayer.

One of the signs of the lack of unity in the Anglican Church of Canada is the increasingly wide diversity of worship music that congregations are using. Again, it must be stressed at the outset that this cannot seriously be blamed solely on liberalism. Rather it is largely a function of liturgical renewal on the one hand and an explosion of contemporary worship music on the other, combined with a sense that variety was to be encouraged.

This is not to imply that all those of traditional/orthodox faith have enthusiastically embraced renewal music. Far from it. The new music comes attached to a more informal and personalized style of worship which is not attractive to many Anglicans. In addition, some find that much of the new music does not reflect the theological depth of more traditional hymns. Indeed, many

congregations who do use the newer music also continue to employ the older hymns for just this reason. Both sides in this debate have something valid to say to each other.

Thus, although there is some division within the traditional/orthodox camp over this aspect of worship, it is not a matter of first importance. There is an underlying commitment to the biblical theology underlying both styles which bridges the gap effectively. It explicitly proclaims the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and well as such doctrines as the deity and bodily resurrection of Jesus. As a result, there is a substantial unity underlying all this diversity that is rooted in the core doctrines of catholic Christianity. The differences between parishes who use such music are more matters of style and taste than of substance. In fact, much of this music comes out of a similar musical style.

It is important to observe that, with the National Church's publication of the "Common Praise" hymn book, the Church entered an era in which a small but significant proportion of its members will actually be unable to bring themselves to sing "the hymns of the church" for doctrinal reasons. Other more liberal-minded Anglicans will find that, even with their pronouns adjusted, the older hymns are just too full of an understanding of the faith that they find archaic, if not repugnant. A large body of Anglicans will just shrug their shoulders and wonder what all the fuss is about.

The fact is that it is only liberals who desire to introduce inclusive language in reference to God, even in some cases to the point of suggesting goddess worship. It is only liberals who want to replace "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" with "Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer" and who avoid as much as possible referring to the fact that God is our Father or that Jesus is a man. It is only liberals who shy away from patriarchal and hierarchical terms for God, especially "Lord" and "King". It is only liberals who are shy about Satan and squeamish about sin. It is only liberals who are embarrassed over the triumph of Christ and his church.

In other words, our divisions over worship music are, because of liberalism, divisions that are much deeper than style. It is now about substance as well. And that is much more serious.

What is the relationship of liberalism to the evident disarray in Christian education within the Anglican Church of Canada? It will be recalled that this area shares in the general disunity that one finds at almost every level of Church life.

As I have been arguing, liberalism is by nature a fragmentizing agent. It knows no boundaries and is in constant flux. Even its emphasis upon experience takes it in the same direction, into expressions that are as varied as the experience of persons is varied. While it is tempting to draw a direct line from the nature of liberalism to the fragmentation of the Church's educative efforts, in reality things are not quite so simple.

For one thing such an explanation fails to account for the wide variety of approaches to this subject even among those Anglicans who are traditional/orthodox Christians. It could be maintained that this phenomenon is at least indirectly the result of the liberalism that led to both the introduction of the "New Curriculum" and its rejection by the grassroots in the mid-sixties.

Indeed, when the histories are written it may be that the New Curriculum will be identified as the first official endorsement of the new way of thinking. As the intended replacement for the aging but thoroughly orthodox General Board of Religious Education (G.B.R.E.) curriculum it failed to attract the same wide usage, thus creating a vacuum. Many parishes were not happy with the revised denominational curriculum and felt it necessary to look elsewhere. As they were basically on their own they naturally ended up in going in a number of different directions. More liberal parishes were also left in a vacuum when the New Curriculum was withdrawn with no replacement. They too had to scramble.

If the old G.B.R.E. curriculum had been brought up to date while retaining its traditional/orthodox perspective, it would perhaps have continued to provide a denominational Sunday School

curriculum that was more widely acceptable and therefore more viable. At the same time, it could have provided the foundation for a stronger sense of unity within the Church. But this would have naturally left liberals still dissatisfied, looking for other curricula to meet their needs. Again, we have a for instance of the incompatibility of the two religions now in the Church.

As far as the issues of baptismal and confirmation preparation are concerned, it must be admitted that the smorgasbord of programs (or lack thereof) is endemic to liberal and traditional/orthodox alike. There are good and sufficient reasons for the present turmoil swirling around the general issue of Christian initiation which have nothing to do with liberalism. Until the ACC is able to address these issues from a common perspective no order will arise out of this chaos. At that time the whole question of adult Christian education can also be addressed. For now, we can expect only diversity to rule.

As for marriage preparation, given the current divisions even over the very definition of marriage, there is little prospect for progress on this front. Our denomination has a desperate need to establish a common understanding of sexuality in general and marriage in particular that will address the needs of contemporary society, but in the current context this frankly seems impossible. The Lone Ranger rides again.

Symptom 5: A Complex Superiority (Reprise)

As was noted when this subject was first addressed, clericalism, the dominance of the clergy, has been a feature of church life almost from the beginning. This is due in large measure to the very nature of the church and is to some extent inescapable and even good to a degree. The historic division between the clergy and the laity has, however, reached dangerous proportions in the Anglican Church of Canada. Much of this can also be traced to the presence of the liberal religion in the denomination.

Perhaps the best way to try to understand this is to follow an imaginary seminarian as she proceeds through the refined educative process on the way to ordination. As we do so we will discover a basic reason why the clergy have become distanced from many of the laity. I must stress at the outset that while the following description reflects a typical experience it does not represent the situation in all our schools or the positions and methodologies of all their faculty members.

Having said that, let us call our student "Gloria" and assume that she is a "cradle" Anglican from a city parish who has felt a call to ministry. Perhaps this is a response to a conversion experience as a teenager after which she augmented her Sunday School knowledge by enthusiastically reading and studying her Bible. After four years of higher education at university she arrives on the doorstep of an Anglican theological college eager to acquire a sure foundation for ministry by means of a thorough exploration of the faith of the Church.

What Gloria gets instead is a baptism of fire. Almost every assumption she has brought with her will be brought into serious question. Of course, the world view bequeathed to her by her Bible and her Church has already been severely challenged by the dominant secularism and politically correct assumptions at her university. Now, oddly, that challenge is deepened at theological college, which is itself immersed in these same influences.

By the end of three years she will, unless she shows great determination and courage, emerge with a radically altered understanding of the faith. The College, typically, is deeply committed to the kind of liberalism outlined in the previous chapter and is in fact the major point at which this new religion is introduced directly into the bloodstream of the Church.

Gloria's Sunday School faith and her "uncritical" straightforward reading of the Scriptures will be under constant and direct attack. She will be informed that no truly modern person could take

the Bible at face value, as she has always done. Assured that all mainstream scholars concur, Gloria is then initiated into the mysteries of modern biblical criticism.²²

She will quickly realize that from this point of view her simple understanding of the faith cannot be sustained and as a result she is plunged into a traumatic and painful crisis of faith. This might come to a head, for example, when she is exposed to the scholarly opinion that the accounts of Jesus's resurrection appearances in the four Gospels are hopelessly contradictory and certainly cannot provide serious support to the idea of a bodily resurrection (which modern people cannot accept in any event). What really happened, she is informed, is that the early church somehow came to have an experience of the "risen Lord" in their midst and these stories of the empty tomb and appearances were written later in order to try to express this spiritual reality in concrete terms understandable to the people of the day.

Ill-prepared for this assault on what she had always believed, Gloria is faced with either following what she had so faithfully been taught in Sunday School or what she was now learning through the authorized and sophisticated teachers of the Church. She might well identify with this quotation from a newspaper interview with an Anglican seminary student:

If you want spirituality, don't go to a seminary. They turn you upside down and inside out and some of us survive and some of us don't. Seminary is not what I expected and not what a lot of others perceive it to be... If you go even not half sure of your faith, you won't make it through. (Saint John Times-Globe, August 2, 1996)

The seminary experience almost seems designed to destroy the simple faith of those students still holding to such an outmoded and intellectually unacceptable religion.

Just as Gloria is feeling the foundation of her old faith begin to crumble she is then introduced to the new faith, liberalism, in whatever form or forms are in vogue on campus. The culture of

²² See above, p.60 ff.

seminary life (and the general academic world) brings powerful pressure on her to conform to one of these. The current models available to her would include radical feminism, liberation theology (leftist political agenda) and eco-justice (environmentalism). To the extent that it is taught at all, traditional/orthodox Christianity is relegated to historical studies.

In the face of all this Gloria may well decide that she has had enough and just drop out. If she continues she will have three options. First of all she may quietly resist the new teaching. I say quietly because vocal, active opposition to the reigning versions is not tolerated well and can lead to much unseemly confrontation. After all, one's whole view of life is at stake. Secondly, she can go with the flow and convert to the new religion altogether. Lastly, she will remain unsure of her beliefs but continue on in her studies in the hope that it will all get sorted out eventually.

Whichever option she selects it is unlikely that it will form any barrier to her being ordained. She will have to commit herself to "conform to the doctrine...of the Anglican Church of Canada" but this is carefully left undefined in any substantial way and it is commonly understood to include any of the liberal varieties as well as traditional/orthodox Christianity. The only belief she will have to affirm in a specific way is the ordination of women, which for her should not be a problem! Any doubts she might have will be soothed by her knowledge that the doctrine of the Church is always open to various interpretations.

Let us presume that Gloria chooses the middle option and buys into the liberal religion. Imagine the task she will face in the parish. Here she is likely to be faced with a congregation in which many have the same Sunday School faith she has left behind. Every Sunday large portions of raw Scripture are read to them and then she has to get up in the pulpit and try to expound a message that does not easily arise directly out of the text. She has been ill-equipped by seminary to provide her listeners with a way to move them from where they are to where she is.

Fortunately, they are predisposed to defer to her now greater understanding of the faith. She is a clergyperson, after all. Who are they to argue? But she finds herself distanced from them by

her training and her faith-journey. They hear her words but are baffled by her theological terminology. It sounds vaguely familiar, but it lacks clear meaning. In this context any changes she feels are necessary are sometimes perceived as imposed, arising out of her agenda, not theirs. She and they are in somewhat separate worlds, even if they are an educationally sophisticated congregation. Her socialist politics and radical feminism may be tolerated as the typical product of the ivory tower not of the real world. What is she to do as the pastor in such a situation?

One thing is almost certain. Gloria will not embark on a program to encourage the uninstructed reading or study of the Bible. She will not do this because she knows, consciously or unconsciously, that the reading of the Scriptures in an "uncritical" fashion, in the pre-modern belief that takes its words in their everyday sense, will lead only to an affirmation of the Sunday School faith she has rejected as obsolete for contemporary Christians. She is certainly not opposed to the reading of the Bible but is acutely aware that, in order for it to be properly understood, it must be interpreted by someone who comes from the perspective of modern critical scholarship. For most parishes that leaves only one person who is qualified. Guess who!

What Gloria may not fully appreciate, however, is that her old Sunday School faith bears an uncanny resemblance to catholic orthodox Christianity. As I have argued in Chapter Three the catholic faith arises out of the understanding of the Bible as God's Word written.²³ It is the final authority. If it says that Jesus rose bodily from the grave and lives forevermore at the right hand of the Father, then that is what Christians are to believe. End of argument. This is taking it at face value following the normal rules of grammar. Once this way of approaching Scripture is abandoned, so also will catholic Christianity be abandoned. It is as inevitable as gravity.

Ironically, the Anglican Church began with an attempt to go in exactly the opposite direction. The English Reformers deliberately set about to put the Bible back into the hands of the average

²³ See above, p. 50f.

believer. It was to be loosed from the fetters imposed by those who had distorted its teachings and had forbidden its use. Let it be read and believed by one and all!

For them the reading of the Bible in its plain ordinary sense was the greatest source of spiritual life that God has provided to his people. It is his Word written, after all. It was to be translated into the common tongue and placed in every parish church. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the composer of much of the Prayer Book, had this to say:

Unto a Christian man, there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable, than the knowledge of Holy Scripture; forasmuch as in it is contained God's true word, setting forth his glory, and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine, necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is, or may be, drawn from that fountain and well of truth. Therefore, as many as be desirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God, must apply their minds to know Holy Scripture; And as drink is pleasant to them that be dry, and meat to them that be hungry; so is the reading, hearing, searching, and studying of Holy Scripture...

And, on the other side, nothing more darkeneth Christ and the glory of God, nor bringeth in more blindness and all kinds of vices, that doth the ignorance of God's word. (The Homilies, Book 1:1)

So we have come full circle. At one time our Church recognized and exploited the connection between the straightforward reading of the Bible by ordinary people and spiritual vitality. Modern critical scholarship has taken the Bible away from the Church just as effectively as the Roman Church had done by the late middle ages. This time around no one is actually forbidden to read the Bible. But in a number of different ways parishioners are told that its true meaning lies behind what it says on the surface and that it takes a special knowledge to be able to access that meaning.²⁴ They are told this by many within the clergy-elite, the ones to whom they look

²⁴ See again my comments in reference to Bishop Ingham's position, above, p. 94 ff.

for spiritual guidance. In Anglican homes the Bible has typically become a closed book, literally as well as figuratively. The result is a biblically illiterate laity and a confused, moribund Church. It is no accident.

There is a great sadness in this. Those like Gloria who have chosen to follow the liberal religion have not only distanced themselves from many of their parishioners, they have sealed themselves off from their past, a past which points the way, the only way, to another reformation and the possibility of a revitalized future.²⁵

Conclusion

No doubt I have made my point. But let me make it again in case you missed it! Liberalism by its very nature has been and continues to be a fundamental reason for the troubles that afflict the Anglican Church of Canada. Its attempt to present a new message in traditional language has resulted in misunderstanding and confusion among the rank and file. It creates disorder because it is fundamentally disorderly. Membership decline and financial woes are its constant companions. Incompatible with the very idea of evangelism, it has proven itself incapable of attracting significant numbers of new adherents. This is what liberalism is and this is what it does.

Do I sound like an alarmist? Is my vision narrow and false, distorted by anger, prejudice, ignorance and fear? I am content to let my readers be the judge of that. But I have come to the conviction that liberalism is not just another option within the spectrum of Christian truth. It is not merely the subject of polite conversation over a glass of sherry. It is a deadly enemy of Christ and his Church. Surely someone has to sound the alarm. Who else but an alarmist?

²⁵ At this point it needs to be said that there are many good reasons to reject the liberal reading of the Bible and return to the conservative one. There is a world of literature available, from C.S. Lewis to J.I. Packer to John Stott to Alister McGrath to N.T. Wright, just to mention a few world-class Anglican scholars.

...if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.'

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me..." (Ezekiel 33:6-7)

CHAPTER SIX

Betting the Farms

For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore, consider carefully how you will listen.

Luke 8:17-18a

Sooner or later, given the underlying division of the Anglican Church of Canada into two incompatible religions, there was bound to be an issue which would force this uncomfortable truth more fully into the open. For a number of reasons, it is readily apparent that the crucial issue has now arrived with the question of whether or not the Church should expand the concept of marriage to include homosexual unions. Of course, behind this lies the question of the morality of homosexual practice in general²⁶.

Belief is a matter of the conscience and the heart. One can change one's belief about Jesus, for example, and that change in belief could easily go unnoticed. Our famous Anglican commitment to comprehensiveness prepared the way for living with a variety of theological positions within the Church as long as morality, which has to do with observable behaviour, was not involved. Add to this the liberal proclivity simply to redefine traditional theological terms and continue to use the liturgies based upon them, instead of just admitting that in their hearts they had adopted a different belief system altogether, and you have a perfect recipe for both deliberate and inadvertent covert change.

²⁶ I am aware that this discussion could be expanded to include the whole LGBTQ question but for now, at least, the immediate issue is homosexual marriage.

In previous generations liberals seem to have simply adopted the conventional morality of the culture but with the sexual revolution of the sixties the cultural consensus changed and eventually the new liberal attitude to the Bible naturally was applied to its ethical teachings as well as its theology. This was bound to force matters more out into the open. You can switch the meaning of your theological terms and not greatly disturb the status quo. However, change your understanding of "adultery" and someone is bound to notice! Probably your spouse!

Therefore, the fundamental division in the ACC is now being played out before our eyes now that liberals are doing everything they can to push for the full inclusion of practicing homosexuals²⁷ in the life of the ACC. Because they control the political process in many dioceses, they have been ordaining homosexuals for some time and have recently elected a partnered gay man as a bishop in the diocese of Toronto. This was done while turning a blind eye to the legitimate objections of traditional/conservative Anglicans.

These efforts have now brought matters fully to the surface over the question of homosexual marriage. Marriage is deemed to be a doctrinal issue and as such its definition cannot be changed without the approval of all three houses of General Synod over two consecutive Synods. As this is written, after being approved by one vote in the House of Clergy (and passing comfortably in the Houses of Laity and Bishops) at GS 2016, it awaits the second vote at GS 2019. The years of fudging in matters of belief and avoiding direct doctrinal confrontation have finally come to an end.

And make no mistake about it. Those on both sides appear willing to bet the farm because each rightly sees the issue as integral to its whole point of view. That is why there can be no compromise and no surrender. To do so would mean not just changing one's mind about this one issue but about one's whole approach to the Christian faith as well. This is what is at stake. The outcome will quite literally affect the entire future direction of the Church.

²⁷ A distinction needs to be made between practicing homosexuals and those who are celibate. For purposes of readability, from this point on I shall mean the former when speaking of "homosexuals".

From the liberal point of view the question of the full acceptance of the homosexual into the Church, including the ordination, blessing, and now marriage of same-sex couples, is merely a matter of justice, liberation, and inclusion. We have already noted that these themes are dominant in liberalism.

Homosexual persons have clearly suffered at the hands of an oppressive straight society, some physically attacked and even killed. They have not been allowed to be themselves but have been forced to hide their sexual orientation and practice in order to function within that society.

Recent years have seen many of them come out of the closet and some have militantly demanded that they be granted their right to have their sexuality accepted on a par with heterosexuality at all levels. Their cause has been taken up by the cultural elite, especially those on the left, those with whom theological liberals have a strong affinity. For them, and for many in our culture, this has become an issue of fundamental human rights.

For sure, all of the major themes of liberalism converge on this issue. Experience has taught that homosexuals are not terrible people: they are as good and as human as the rest of us sinners. Many priests of all persuasions have found homosexuals in their congregations and have come to appreciate their gifts within the life of the Church as well their pain at being denied full participation. For liberals the negative things the Bible has to say about practicing homosexuals must be evaluated in the light of our own contemporary experience, remembering their understanding that the nature of the Bible itself allows us to pick and choose from its teachings.

Furthermore, homosexuals are seeking liberation, the freedom to be themselves. Nothing could be closer to the liberal heart. And here we are in a Church which makes them into second class citizens. On what basis can they continue to be excluded? It is a shameful thing, from this perspective, that the Church is not prepared to reach out and fully welcome this oppressed minority. For these and other reasons, the full acceptance of practicing homosexuals has become

a non-negotiable item on the liberal agenda. Any other stand would contradict their twin commitments to experience as the ultimate guide and to liberation as the ultimate goal.

Lest anyone be tempted to underestimate the depth of this commitment we need, first of all, to remember the enthusiastic election and consecration of a homosexual man living with his partner in the diocese of Toronto already mentioned. Secondly, ponder this: after it seemed at first that the last General Synod had turned down the proposed change in the Marriage Canon, a number of diocesan bishops went on record as saying that they would proceed anyway and authorize the marriage of homosexuals in their own dioceses. While this vote turned out to be a miscount and the motion actually passed, the stand of these bishops indicates that homosexual marriage will be a reality in the ACC no matter what the next GS decides!

While putting principle over process is indeed admirable, it is an ominous sign for the future of the denomination. For starters, these bishops have indicated that they are fully prepared to break the ordination vows they made to conform to the doctrine and discipline of the ACC. As such, they would be answerable to the powers that be! Or would they be? Liberals control the political process as was seen in the Toronto ordination of a partnered gay man. Given the fact that they have been fudging on their ordination vows for generations in regard to “the Doctrine of the ACC”, perhaps they would just continue to turn a blind but practiced eye when it comes to its Discipline. Doubtless this would precipitate a very serious crisis of authority that would further reveal the divisions and frailties that beset us. We will return to this point in the next chapter.

In any event, having rogue bishops of any stripe loose in the denomination would surely precipitate chaos at every level as many would simply conclude that anything goes. As I have already argued, we are not actually that far away from this situation at present and it wouldn't take much of a push to go over the edge. All bets would be off. Except the one involving the farm!

There are some on both sides of this question that see it merely as an extension of the previous debates in the Church over divorce and remarriage and the ordination of women. From this point

of view, hope remains that some kind of accommodation can be reached here as well. While there is some truth to this position, it would be a serious mistake to assume too much similarity between this debate and those of the past.

For one thing, the issue of homosexuality is a clear-cut case of morality rather than a question of order in the Church. This raises the stakes considerably. For another, on the previous issues the traditional/orthodox camp was divided pro and con. Many recognized that the Biblical evidence in reference to these debates was ambiguous and could be legitimately seen as supportive of both sides. This had the effect of limiting outright opposition to a relatively small section of the Church. It also made compromise and accommodation possible even when one personally felt others to be in error. *It cannot be stressed enough that this is not the case in the matter of homosexuality.*

Traditional/orthodox believers in the ACC are, with very few exceptions, at one in their opposition to the acceptance of homosexual practice. They see it as contrary to God's will and thus sinful. They are convinced that the Scripture relevant to this issue is both clear and unequivocal. Because these Anglicans are committed to the authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice, any stand taken contrary to this by the General Synod or by the House of Bishops will put them into an impossibly awkward position. Acceptance of the new Marriage Canon will do just that.

They would then be part of a Church which, for the first time, had in their view officially departed from the Scriptures in a matter of doctrine. For them it would be on the same level as an official denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church would finally have put itself over the Bible. This is the real issue. Homosexual marriage is not the sin of all sins but that is not the point. Accepting it would mean that the ACC had finally taken the step many have feared it would ultimately take, given the dominance of liberalism in its ranks. It could have been taken in reference to any other clearly biblical doctrine. And it may yet in time to come.

In taking such action the ACC would, in the eyes of its traditional/orthodox members, officially abandon the view of Scripture and its authority which has been the theological foundation of the catholic church from the beginning.

As I have pointed out, this foundation has already been abandoned by the liberal wing of the Church. Once the Church is willing deliberately to set aside the traditional understanding of Scripture, what we believe and practice as a Church will be determined by the current consensus. It will be revealed by a majority vote in the General Synod and will become the "truth" no matter what Scripture says and what the church has always taught. With experience as the guide there is literally no telling in what direction the Church will go and there is no way to direct it except through the use of raw political power.

This is not the kind of Church in which many traditional/orthodox Christians could feel comfortable for very long. While the facade of the "official doctrine of the Church" remained in place it was possible for them to function as Anglicans with a reasonable degree of integrity. For many years they have been at odds with what has been going on behind the scenes but have been content to get on with the job of ministry, letting others involve themselves in the politics of the Church.

Those others have tended to be more liberal, predisposed to see the Kingdom as a matter of social and political action and so become more involved in church government and bureaucracy. Therefore, it is partly through its own neglect that the traditional/orthodox camp finds itself on the outside looking in as far as power in the Church is concerned. (They are a minority in any event.) Now, with the possibility of a serious departure from the faith on the horizon, its sense of alienation is exacerbated by an almost overwhelming sense of powerlessness. This is a recipe for mass defection.

There are several other reasons to think that the acceptance of homosexual practice will result in many feeling they have no option but to leave the ACC. For some it will be a simple case of not

wanting to be part of a Church that is officially affirming as right and good what they consider to be sinful. It is one thing to know that some in the Church have departed from the faith. It is quite another to realize the Church itself has done so. This would be too much, indicating the ACC had fallen into schism.

They would see in such acceptance the official abandonment of Scripture as the rule of faith and this would cast a serious shadow over any claim of the ACC to be part of the church universal. According to the Thirty-nine Articles, “The visible Church is a congregation of faithful men, which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ’s ordinance...” (XIX, p.706, BCP). Certainly, on this basis most would agree that the ACC had little theological claim to be the same Church as Cranmer and Hooker and the Book of Common Prayer.

For those who are thinking that I am exaggerating the problem or even using liberalism as a kind of scapegoat, consider this: no fewer than five diocesan bishops have departed our denomination for the Anglican Network in Canada soon after their retirement. Whatever one thinks of the validity of their reasons (all directly linked to liberalism), these defections are unprecedented in our history and must be taken as a sign that there is indeed a serious problem in our midst. As if the very formation of ANiC was not serious enough! Are we just going to ignore all this? Do we not care that our Church is breaking apart with great pain before our very eyes?

For various reasons the advance of liberalism has been quicker in the Episcopal Church (ECUSA) than in Canada. If we want to see what may be coming here next, we just have to look south of the border. There, no less than five diocesan bishops have departed ECUSA and taken a good part of their dioceses (Pittsburgh, South Carolina, San Joaquin, Quincy and Fort Worth) with them into the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA, which has also admitted ANiC as a Diocese).

Other Episcopal dioceses, formerly associated with these five, Albany, Dallas, Springfield, Central Florida and Rio Grande, while sympathetic, did not join them in leaving. ECUSA’s leadership has responded, not with a serious look at themselves, but with lawsuits and vigorous attempts to

recover “their” properties from those who left. They would rather proceed with their agenda than reconsider their commitments in light of the breakup of their Church. They have already bet the farm.

All this has not gone unnoticed in the Anglican Communion itself. While the majority of its member Churches are very sympathetic to the conservative theology of ACNA, it has not (yet) recognized the latter as a bona fide Province of the Communion. While there are procedural difficulties in so doing, a number of the Primates of member Provinces have declared their Churches to be in full communion with ACNA and refuse to acknowledge ECUSA!

An association of conservative Anglican Provinces called the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), representing a majority of Anglicans worldwide, has admitted ACNA as one of *its* Provinces. Indeed, the Lambeth Conference of 1998 rejected “...homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, call[ing] on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals...” in Resolution 1.10.

Furthermore, the Archbishop of Canterbury called the Primates of the Communion together in January 2016 to explore what should be done about the decision of ECUSA to permit the marriage of homosexual persons and the developments in Canada toward the same end. Significantly, Archbishop Foley Beach, head of the breakaway ACNA in the US and Canada, was invited and took part in this meeting. Some of these Primates demanded the actual eviction of ECUSA and ACC from the Anglican Communion! While this did not happen, 2/3 of the 37 Primates present approved imposing sanctions on ECUSA as the following portion of their communique indicates:

It is our unanimous desire to walk together. However given the seriousness of these matters we formally acknowledge this distance by requiring that for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating

in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity.

Apparently, the reason for the three-year period was to give ECUSA the opportunity to reconsider its position at its next General Convention. Since this is extremely unlikely, it looks like ECUSA is liable to either come under greater and long-lasting sanctions or even be evicted from the Communion altogether.

And so the fracturing continues, putting a lot more farms on the table.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fault Prophecy?

Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

Matthew 9:17

Before proceeding we need to step back and retrace our steps in order to see how we have gotten to this point. In so doing we will be better able both to assess the present situation and also get a better sense of what might lie ahead. What follows is a brief summary of what we have determined so far:

1) From its beginning "catholic", or what I have called traditional/orthodox Christianity, has been built upon the assumption that the Bible is the very Word of God and is utterly truthful in what it teaches. The whole belief-structure of Christianity rises out of this fundamental conviction. It has guided doctrinal understanding and debate for two thousand years.

2) Up until recently, the Anglican Church, as part of the one, catholic, and apostolic church, has both explicitly and implicitly agreed with this view of Scripture.

3) In the late 19th century liberalism was introduced into the life of the Church. Starting from a rejection of the traditional view of the Bible, it sought to adapt the teaching of the Church to the new theories of science and culture.

4) The basic principles of liberalism are inclusiveness, universalism and the authority of experience. These, along with liberalism's ever-changing faces, have proven to be incompatible

with the traditional/orthodox faith upon which the Church was founded. It is, in fact, another religion altogether. As a result, there are two religions competing for attention in the same Church.

5) As well as being divided at its heart, and partly *because* of that, the denomination is in serious decline and faces crises on many fronts.

6) Many of the problems in the Church, especially the decline in membership relative to non-liberal churches, are either the direct result of liberalism or have been worsened by its influence.

7) The unacknowledged clash between the two religions is the major factor in the gridlock that afflicts the denomination.

8) Both sides have found themselves backed into opposite corners over the issue of homosexual practice/marriage. Each side rightly sees its fundamental principles at stake and is unprepared to back away from its position.

9) The division over homosexuality is just the presenting symptom while the underlying cause is the clash between the two religions.

10) The same fundamental division is threatening the future of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

And now to the task at hand. In geology, a fault is defined as a fracturing in the earth's crust caused by massive forces at work beneath the surface. One of these is the San Andreas Fault which runs roughly north and south through much of California. By studying such geological phenomena and the history of past earthquake activity in a particular area, scientists try to predict the timing of an earthquake and the pattern of destruction that would follow. The famous

Richter Scale was developed to measure the intensity of these upheavals and the tremors which sometimes precede them.

Similarly, it is possible to trace the fault lines already present in the Anglican Church of Canada in order to predict what might happen if an "earthquake" were to hit. When we combine this with a consideration of the tremors that have already been felt we too can map out the future based on a kind of ecclesiastical Richter Scale. This chapter will suggest how the "fault lines" of unstable conditions that already exist just beneath the surface in the Church will likely play themselves out in such an event.

As any geologist will admit, however, it is impossible to predict the exact path of devastation because of the complexity of nature. Similarly, it must not be assumed that what follows here is offered with a high degree of precision. Prophecy in the absence of divine inspiration is always a risky business! In spite of this, it is possible to predict the general pattern of destruction. If you have discovered a major fault and if it lies in a region subject to earthquake activity, then you know roughly what is going to happen in the actual event. You would do your best to alert the population to the danger in the hope that they would make the appropriate preparations. You might even write a book about it!

It will come as no surprise that this writer is convinced (and has tried to convince his readers) that the Anglican Church of Canada is, in fact, sitting on top of a major fault line running between its two incompatible religions. As yet there has been no triggering earthquake but there have been a lot of tremors creating serious concern as this book has tried to demonstrate.

At this point in time it is not difficult to predict when the big one will hit. Many, including this author, are convinced that it will take place after the second and final vote on the changes to the Marriage Canon that will take place at General Synod next July (GS 2019) in Vancouver. Multiple signs are pointing to this as the event that will trigger others to follow. It will send out shockwaves that have the potential of doing serious damage.

It is now time to predict how GS 2019 will affect the Church by extending the fault lines and tensions we have already discovered. At the very least the underlying liberal/conservative division of the Church will be forced closer to the surface, making it more visible for all who are willing to look into the ugly abyss. Gird yourselves. This is not for the faint of heart.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to consider a couple of other contextual realities that will enter into our assessment of what will happen. Both will make it even more difficult for the two religions to come to a common mind or even work together. But they may also help provide a willingness to consider the radical changes that might save us.

It is important to realize that adherents of both religions, liberal and conservative alike, are feeling restricted by current realities and yearn for a Church in which they can function with greater effectiveness for the Kingdom (as each envisions it). They might well re-imagine an ACC in which:

- the constant internecine conflict experienced at all levels of its structures and institutions would be significantly reduced, if not eliminated altogether.
- each side was able to “do its own thing” in its own way and get on with its mission as it understands it.
- each parish would have a bishop who shared its basic theological perspective and was fully supportive of its worship, mission and ethos.
- parishes were able enthusiastically to co-operate with other local parishes in mission and service.
- parishes could give enthusiastically to their dioceses and not see such payments merely as the “price of admission” to a fruitless conversation.
- clergy meetings would share a common focus and be mutually supportive of one another’s ministries, unencumbered by mixed agendas and misunderstandings. And with no elephants in the room.

- Synods could deal with issues from a more common perspective and be more supportive of local initiatives and programs.
- parishes feel less alienated or distant from their dioceses, more enthusiastic participants in synodical structures.
- common programs for worship, mission, evangelism, education and service could be developed.

The power of these re-imaginings must not be underestimated in a Church fast approaching dysfunction. Each side considers itself to be doing God's work and this provides a strong motivation to try to get on with the task as unhindered as possible.

It must also be kept in mind that both sides have reason to consider themselves the legitimate successor to the founders of the ACC. The liberal side has been a vital part of its structures and for generations. It would be fair to say that it is now by far the dominant religion of the two, with its hands on most of the levers of power, its adherents in most positions of authority. It could be called the *institutional* successor. The conservative side, also a (lesser) participant in the structures and institutions of the ACC for generations, represents the founding religion and could be called the *theological/spiritual* successor.

I believe that both sides are, for various reasons, willing to see the legitimacy of the other's claim to succession, even though at present preoccupied with establishing their own position. Each is fundamentally uneasy with an outright denial of the other's claim. And besides, they share a long history of collegiality and of belonging to the same institution.

Keeping these considerations in mind we can now explore the likely outcomes of GS 2019.

The eventual net effect of GS 2019 will be to confirm the central thesis of this book that the ACC is indeed deeply divided by its two religions.

The motion to amend the Marriage Canon will be approved, rejected or tabled. In what follows I will argue that whatever happens, the ACC will go through significant trauma and be forever changed, but in different ways depending on the way the vote actually goes. As I see it, there are only three foreseeable longer-term outcomes, one leading fairly quietly but sadly to a solidly liberal Church, one leading to chaos and gridlock that will take years to reach some kind of indeterminate resolution, if it ever does reach resolution, or one that will channel that chaos and gridlock fairly quickly into the structural changes necessary to accommodate the realities of the Church in the 21st century. The first will come about if the motion succeeds. If it fails, then either the second or third will take place. What follows are my reasons for suggesting these outcomes.

- a) THE FUTURE MOST LIKELY: The motion to amend the Marriage Canon passes the second vote, inspiring further alienation from the worldwide Anglican Communion, and causing a significant proportion of remaining conservatives to leave the ACC.

The Anglican Communion

As we have noted the Episcopal Church in the US has already been put under sanctions by the Communion for taking the same action now taken by the ACC. The latter will now no doubt be subject to the same sanctions, with the expectation that more serious action, perhaps even expulsion from the Communion, would be taken if this action is not reversed. While the possibility of such a development would not likely have much of a deterrent effect on the Canadian vote in the first place, it would, if it becomes a reality, remove another reason for staying in the ACC for some. Indeed, it would be seen by many as putting the ACC into the position of being truly and publicly a schismatic Church. After all, the first principle of the Solemn Declaration of 1893, the founding document of the ACC, states that it desires to be in full communion with the Anglican Communion and through it to the church catholic. If the Communion rejects the ACC, then it becomes a serious question as to how it could claim to be part of the church catholic. Not to mention that it could be argued that by approving the amended Marriage Canon, GS would be in

the awkward position of having contradicted its founding document's basic commitment to walk together.

Individual Anglicans

The impact on individual conservative/orthodox members of the ACC will also be significant. It is one thing to be an orthodox believer in a Church that is at least officially orthodox. It is quite another to be one in a Church that has *officially* abandoned that orthodoxy and will likely abandon it further. There is no longer any smokescreen to hide behind, no longer any Creed to point to, nor, most importantly, any Bible to which to appeal. And for all the reasons discussed in Chapter Five many of them will leave. They will know full well and without a doubt that the whole doctrinal structure of the ACC, as it is presently constituted, has no real foundation.

A number of conservative clergy who are ministering in “typical” Anglican parishes will go because they identify with the following sentiments expressed by one of their number who departed the ACC in response to GS 2016. Here is only part of what the Rev. John Oakes had to say:²⁸

In what amounts to an exit memo like this, it is tempting to focus solely on the negative. But it is important to be clear that for most of my ministerial career, I enjoyed good relations with people of many different theological positions. I still do. I also remain grateful for what I learned in the ACC, for the different parishes where I ministered, and for the many opportunities I had to serve and to reach out with the good news of the gospel.

But after General Synod—and especially after some bishops effectively negated a national decision-making process by making “interim,” pastoral arrangements for same-sex marriage before it had been fully approved—the trust I once had in the church's local and

²⁸ The reader is encouraged to read the full article at <http://livingwordlive.com/36-2/why-i-left/>

national leaders was severely weakened. And I came to the conclusion that I could no longer continue to serve in the ACC either to the best of my abilities or in good faith.

Related to this loss of trust was a parallel sense of losing voice. As incumbent of a diverse parish of differing viewpoints, where strong advocacy on either side of the same-sex marriage debate would have been highly divisive, I refrained from expressing my position from the pulpit for pastoral reasons, even though it was quite well known. So, I understand, have other clergy, even in parishes otherwise recognized as evangelical. By taking the first of two steps towards officially authorizing marriage for same-sex couples in the ACC, General Synod aggravated the challenge for traditionalist clergy wishing to address such issues. And by jumping the gun in making pastoral provisions for it, bishops only made matters worse.

In making this last point, I am aware of its obvious weaknesses. No-one is called into gospel ministry to tell people what they want to hear or to avoid controversial issues because they may upset or divide. Jesus's own example clearly indicates otherwise. But when one reaches a point, as I did, where one feels inhibited, for strong pastoral reasons, from speaking the gospel truth as one understands it, it becomes impossible to minister with full integrity.

There are hundreds of conservative clergy in both liberal and conservative dioceses who would sympathize with these statements, having felt that the current state of affairs in the ACC forces them to make compromises that seriously curtail the effectiveness of their ministry. That is because there are very few parishes that are solidly conservative. Almost every parish is divided on the question of same-sex marriage, but not all are divided in the same way. Conservative clergy have found that working in a "typical" parish was what they were called to do as preachers of the Gospel but are finding that the current state of this division imposes impossible limitations on what they can say or do. And so they, too, will be sorely tempted to leave for a less restrictive

environment. This temptation will only intensify once same-sex marriage becomes the doctrine of the ACC.

Whatever their exact reasons for this moment being the line in the sand for many individual parishioners and clergy, the truth is that, after GS 2016, they are already beginning to move. So many have contacted The Right Rev. Charlie Masters, the Bishop of Anglican Network in Canada, that he has actually written a general letter:

... in response to a growing number of calls and requests that have come from Anglican believers, both clergy and laity, who find themselves very distressed as they ponder the most recent developments in the Anglican Church of Canada at its General Synod last July and since.

We have actually never experienced this number of inquiries. Some have come directly to our Diocesan office but many have been made to the local ANiC clergy in their respective communities. Either way, the distress is real and the concern about what these developments may mean for orthodox Anglicans in the future seems to be growing...
Beyond praying, we are willing and eager to stand with you in any way we can.

In other words, this is showing all too many signs of being the big one for many individual Anglicans!

Anglican Parishes

This is also true for those *parishes* that are more or less solidly conservative. Over recent years about 20 whole (or almost whole) parishes have already left the denomination behind, most (all?) of them joining ANiC. And they have tended to be lively and growing congregations. In fact, one of them, St. John's, Shaughnessy, in Vancouver, with an average Sunday attendance of 750 and a Sunday School of 160, was the largest ACC congregation in Canada! Those who departed left

behind a massive church structure with a skeletal congregation. When it went, St. John's took the world-renowned evangelical Anglican scholar, J.I. Packer, with it. Another sad loss.

Leaving is always a difficult and very painful process. It has torn apart local bodies of Christ, for one thing, and this should not be glossed over in any consideration of the phenomenon. Although this may be a so-called hidden cost, it is all too real. There is also the pain of all the divisions which lead up to the actual decision to leave. Relatives and friends become alienated and estranged, vestries and committees become battle grounds, clergy are torn in their pastoral duties, annual meetings are a nightmare.

When a large proportion of a parish leaves, the "stayers" are left behind to try to keep the parish running with less than half of the people and income they had before. This is a very hard road and often leads to closure and sale of the property, given the difficulty to survive that even non-divided parishes are facing.

As well as the loss of their relationships with fellow parishioners, those who leave as a group almost always suffer the loss of their buildings as well. In the Anglican system the local ACC bishop is their technical owner and at the end of the day he retains them in most of these situations. This is in spite of the fact that neither he nor the diocese has ever paid a cent toward the purchase or maintenance of these churches and halls (although in some cases dioceses have provided low-cost loans and other support for such). However, the leavers have helped bear the financial burdens for years, and who can blame them if they are sometimes extremely upset when they discover they have no ownership rights at all. It is their church, they have paid (at least) for its upkeep, they are (often) its officers and members of vestry and yet they are forced to leave it all behind. It seems contrary to the principles of natural justice that they get nothing. Nevertheless, that has not stopped a number of parishes from leaving and others will follow them after the amendment passes its second vote.

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Given the high spiritual and emotional cost of parishes leaving, why do they do it? It is no doubt partly because these parishes have a high percentage of Anglicans who fit into the “individual” category already discussed above. A critical mass of such persons in a single parish would no doubt be enough to do it. However, there are also some reasons for leaving that are due to the unique vexations of being a conservative parish in a liberal diocese and denomination.

In order to get a sense of this, I will include some remarks taken from published accounts by the Rev. John Cox, rector of St. Alban's, Port Alberni on Vancouver Island in 1996.

What seems to have triggered their decision to leave is a combination of intense frustration with the official structures of the Church and considerations unique to that particular parish. The details are sketchy in reference to the latter and, in any event, they would be both inappropriate and irrelevant to our discussion here. Here is how Mr. Cox has expressed the former in reference to his own congregation:

On the parish level we...have felt unsupported in our ministry and have been in the awkward position of having to explain statements by leaders that appear to many as being inconsistent with the Christian Gospel... It is not, and should not be our function to hold the leadership accountable to uphold traditional Christian values and teaching - indeed it should be the other way round!...(i.e., *it is the leadership which should be defending the faith on behalf of the faithful-my comment*)

The current direction of the Anglican Church has not encouraged or enriched local ministry and in fact has been a major factor draining energy and attention away from what we believe Jesus would have us focus on....

We believe that we have genuinely attempted to make a meaningful contribution to the life and ministry of the Anglican Church and we have repeatedly voiced concerns about (various] issues ... We have done so at deanery level, diocesan conferences, synods, and in

personal conversations. We have been told that we have been heard but it feels more like a grudging toleration....

We are choosing to be pro-active in our identity as a church rather than waiting to see what will happen at the next Synod...and the next...*The Good News is too good and the mission of the Lord Jesus too great for us to wait in limbo any longer!* (his italics)

We are convinced that our efforts should be poured into reaching out into the world to share the Gospel with those who are lost, and to share in the ministry of healing and hope with the wounded and the poor. Unfortunately, the Anglican umbrella has become more of a hindrance and a liability than an asset in the fulfillment of this vision. We have found ourselves having to make a choice between seeking to salvage a crumbling institution or going out into world in the name of Christ to serve Him as best we can according to His agenda not ours.²⁹

It is clear that this intense feeling of frustration became an intolerable burden for this particular parish. For one thing the leadership wanted some assurances that the diocese would cease its liberal drifting so that they could in good faith ask parishioners to invest in an expanded facility. Why put more capital into a "crumbling institution"? Their requests that the diocese define the limits of Christian belief and practice naturally fell on unresponsive ears. They came to the conclusion that the way the ACC went about its business was fundamentally flawed and that further association with it was actually a serious hindrance to their efforts to proclaim and live out the Gospel! The parish simply wanted to get on with the job and not be caught up in fruitless internal debates which, in its judgement, were going to result in official departures from Biblical religion no matter what it said or did.

No wonder they left. In spite of the admittedly great cost.

²⁹ All quotes taken from a from a Statement by the Rev. John Cox in January 1996 entitled "Concerns Relating to the Anglican Church of Canada"

Bishops and Dioceses

A positive vote would also have ramifications for several conservative bishops and, perhaps, entire dioceses. After the first vote passed GS 2016, eight bishops, seven of them diocesans, issued a statement saying that GS had “grievously erred” in its decision and they were publicly dissenting from it. They called on the Primate “to seek ways to guarantee our place within the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Communion.” This is serious stuff.

In an interview with the Anglican Journal, one of the signatories, Bishop Fraser Lawton of Athabasca, was quoted as saying that these bishops were concerned that “there may be a relearning of how we relate to one another, and that some things that were always givens may not be so now.” He went on to explain by saying “I think there will be a time of thinking deeply what the relationships are between Anglicans within Canada—bishops, dioceses, individuals—and it’s an unknown at this point what that will look like.” Again, this is serious stuff. And it does hint at the need for some sort of reconfiguration of the ACC. We will return to this subject later.

In their statement, the bishops reaffirm their commitment to the Anglican Church of Canada, as well as to the Church Catholic and the Anglican Communion. They also reaffirm their commitment to “the scriptural, traditional and catholic definition of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman as set out in both the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Alternative Services.” The obvious problem is that the latter commitment is going to be incompatible with the former (to the ACC) if the amendment passes.

The reader is reminded that *several dioceses have actually departed the Episcopal Church south of the border* (with some of their parishes declining to move with them) for these same reasons. Is there any reason (besides being Canadians!) why this could not happen here? When we have eight of our bishops saying such things in public you know that something unprecedented is taking place and that we need to pay close attention. This tremor should be strong enough for all of us to check the foundations.

If, in fact, one or more dioceses act to disassociate themselves from the ACC, one can rest assured that this will trigger a response from the worldwide Anglican Communion in one form or the other. This will no doubt follow the path already blazed in regard to the American dioceses that have already departed the Episcopal Church. That is, many Provinces of the Communion will agitate for the inclusion of the departed dioceses within the Communion and the process of excluding the ACC already underway will gain further momentum. If the Communion ends up barring the ACC, it will more easily be perceived as schismatic.

Sympathetic conservative Canadian bishops and dioceses will also be put in a difficult position if a fellow conservative diocese leaves the ACC. It will be hard for them to simply stand and watch as their fellow conservative Anglicans come under intense legal attack from the ACC, as they have in the U.S. This will be even more urgent if a leaving diocese is unable to support itself financially and needs help to continue its mission or even survive. At this point in time it is impossible to tell what such a scenario would look like, except that it would not be pretty.

The Indigenous Church

Yet another complication we face is the place of our indigenous Anglican sisters and brothers in all this, whichever way the vote goes. The Church has been trying hard to accommodate itself to these members of its community and is in the process of working with them toward providing a self-determining Indigenous church within our structures. From all accounts our indigenous peoples are more conservative on the question of same-sex marriage. As such, they may consider a positive vote as yet another alien cultural notion threatening their way of life.

These Anglicans form a large constituent of several dioceses and also have their own bishops over the Territory of the People and the diocese of The Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh. In addition, they have a National Indigenous Anglican Bishop and several decision-making bodies. What their overall reaction to these developments would be is anybody's guess, but indigenous Anglicans must be taken into account and be part of the process.

Addressing Conservative Concerns?

These various leavings will happen in spite of the likelihood that General Synod will make some kind of attempt to address conservative concerns. However, it is difficult to imagine any action that will effectively prevent the described scenarios from unfolding in some form or other. It is like trying to square the circle. But these remarks by Primate Fred Hiltz express the hope that it can be done:

I would say there's...a deep yearning within the House (of Bishops) that...we get to General Synod with maybe some kind of amendment to the amendment that actually speaks to the reality that there are a variety of views of marriage in our church—an amendment that could possibly get worded...to reflect the fact that people of a conservative view of marriage would feel absolutely free to continue to aspire to that view—teach it, uphold it and practice it. And that liberals would understand that,” he said. “And then on the other side of the coin, that liberals would have the blessing of the church to proceed with same-gender marriages with an assurance that people of a conservative view understand that and respect it. And that neither is imposing their view on the other...”³⁰

This would be all be very nice but as the Jake Worley affair and the general animosity stirred up by the two religions each trying to do its own thing have already demonstrated, “nice” is a bit of a stretch. And if we look south of the border to Bishop Bill Love and the imposition of their new Marriage Canon on all dioceses, it may be impossible.³¹

It is nevertheless incumbent upon us to explore a couple of possible ways in which the attempt might be made.

1) A good conscience clause

³⁰ Tali Folkins and Joelle Kidd, *Anglican Journal*, November 13, 2018

³¹ See below, p. 159-60

Some will hope that a “conscience clause” will enable conservatives to live with the decision of General Synod. The provision of a conscience clause was a key element in getting General Synod's approval of the ordination of women back in the day. It recognized the right of persons to disassociate themselves from the ministry of ordained women while at the same time committing them not to obstruct such ministry. Those clergy who objected to the ordination of women were permitted to continue in their ministries protected by the conscience clause.

Even if a conscience clause could be constructed to allow for non-conformity on the question of same-sex marriage (and right now it is hard to imagine one that could, given the tensions already present), it would put the ACC in the slightly ridiculous position of having two “valid” but contradictory doctrines of marriage (as the Primate’s remarks above suggest). This would be inherently unstable.

Besides, the actual history of the conscience clause has an ominous message for those who hope it will protect their place in the ACC. In the case of women’s ordination, General Synod eventually removed the clause, effectively making only one view possible in any public sense. It is now understood that the Church will only ordain those who accept the ordination of women.

Given this history it is extremely unlikely that those who are opposed to same-sex marriage would ever believe that a conscience clause, however worded, would guarantee their place in the ACC. It would be clearly seen as at best a temporary resting place that would eventually have only one outcome: the eventual elimination of all opposition to the position adopted by the General Synod. It is not an acceptable long-term solution.

2) Vowing to change

One particular area of angst is over how conservative candidates for ordination could vow “to conform to the Doctrine and Discipline of the ACC” (BAS p.635 [Bishop], p.645 [Priest], p.654 [Deacon]) once that Doctrine includes the new Marriage Canon. As we have noted, liberals have, from the traditional/orthodox perspective, at least, been fudging on their vows for generations,

but conservatives, being more literal minded, would simply not be able to commit themselves to “conform” to same-sex marriage.

The cleanest and most radical solution would be to eliminate this vow altogether. But how could a Church then have any basis on which to ordain someone other than his or her psychological integrity as a human being? Almost any belief would then be acceptable, and any sense of doctrinal discipline would be non-existent.

Another possible solution would be for the ACC finally to come to terms with the fact that its demand for conformity to its Doctrine is almost meaningless. That is, its Doctrine remains so undefined that it is just not possible to imagine what “conformity” to it might mean. Although the website of the denomination refers to the ecumenical Creeds and the Thirty-Nine Articles as among “Our Beliefs”, it is commonly understood by its leaders that these are merely the historic positions of the Church which can nowadays be interpreted in a variety of ways. Generations of theological students have been taught to take them this way and therefore they are able with good and sincere consciences to vow to conform to these authorities, knowing that they are not required to take them for what they plainly say³². This may seem odd to lay people and even deceptive, but, as we have seen³³, it is the reality.

One could say that a logical and responsible response would be for the ACC to simply and straightforwardly define the Doctrine to which it demands conformity from all of its clergy. As “logical and responsible” as such an approach might be, it is also virtually impossible! It would be totally rejected by an establishment that knows full well that at its heart, liberalism cannot define what it believes because it is so varied and constantly changing. For this reason alone, we will never see “the Doctrine of the Anglican Church of Canada” as an authoritative standard officially and straightforwardly put in writing.

³² I personally witnessed this at work when the bishop who ordained me told one of my fellow ordinands “not to worry about it” when he had expressed his angst over taking these vows while not fully accepting “official” doctrine.

³³ See p. 68

The Church also knows that its principle of inclusion makes very problematic any attempt to draw a circle around what is and what is not acceptable for an Anglican clergyperson to believe. Again, I refer to Archbishop Peers' remarks when, in reference to Essentials 94, he said that he wanted "...to discourage a tendency to suggest that one group is right and another not, a tendency that moves into issues of power and talk about winners and losers rather than about brothers and sisters."³⁴ I also refer again to the Rev. Cox's futile efforts to have his diocese address the limits of doctrinal positions.³⁵

A great part of the complexity here is the fact that liberals and conservatives actually think in different ways and this makes real communication (and relationship) very difficult. Liberals honestly do not comprehend how seriously those in the traditional/orthodox camp take departures from our official positions. Having a different understanding of the function of symbol and language, liberals really feel that they are not making any real departures at all. In their view, they are simply articulating the faith in ways appropriate to their culture like Christians have always done. For liberals it is merely a matter of formulating a contemporary expression of the "unchanging faith" that exists beneath the surface.

Traditional/orthodox people, on the other hand, find it impossible to make a distinction between the faith and its original authorized articulation in the Scriptures. This is not to deny that the Gospel is to adapt itself to various cultures. But its basic shape and fundamental truths dare not be changed. There is no inarticulate "unchanging faith" which can somehow be separated from its expression. They see this idea as a modern construct which has no warrant in Scripture or tradition.

Given these realities, there does remain one possibility of dealing with an impasse over ordination vows, not by defining Doctrine, but by defining or changing the phrase "conform to".

³⁴ General Synod 1995 Report, p. 2

³⁵ Above, p. 150

This would have to be done explicitly and in writing by General Synod. If it were to read “generally conform to”, for example, it might be acceptable to both liberals and conservatives. It would allow liberals the room to continue to do what they are already doing and for conservatives to have an assurance they could take the vows, while disagreeing with a particular newly-minted doctrine. However, it would clearly be difficult to hold anyone accountable to such a vow and this alone would make its adoption by General Synod very unlikely, if not meaningless as well.

On the other hand, as things stand, the fact that the Church currently demands that its candidates for ordination at all levels make a virtually meaningless vow surely brings disrepute on the institution. It makes hypocrites of us all. Maybe honesty is the best policy and we need to do away with the vow altogether, after all. At least it wouldn't be a bad place for a *church* to start! But don't count on it.

In conclusion, there does not appear to be any way to make a truly “safe space” for the conservative wing of the ACC if the amendment passes. This will result in an ACC that is fully in the grip of the liberal religion as the conservative drag on its agendas and programs, such as it is, will be reduced to the point of irrelevance. In other words, the re-imaginings above would approach reality, but only for those on the liberal side. For conservatives, the possibilities of such visions and dreams would be lost, perhaps forever, as they would find themselves utterly without significant influence in the ACC and frustrated at every turn by an unsympathetic and misunderstanding establishment.

Those conservatives who decide to remain anyway will make their peace, such as they can, with living in a liberal church with minimal political power and collegial support. They will know that the battle for the soul of the ACC has been lost, at least for the foreseeable future and they will put their efforts into whatever Gospel endeavours they feel called to support. In the future, people will probably be as surprised to learn that a conservative remnant in the ACC still exists as they would be to learn there is still one today in the United Church of Canada.

Staying in the ACC will appeal to a certain demographic of conservative Anglicans who for a number of reasons, including an abhorrence of schism, have a high tolerance for living in what for them would be a difficult environment. Fundamentally, they will simply believe that the Lord has called them to stay and continue to fish from the ACC boat. Some will no doubt see this call as The Way of the Cross, as a call to die in the hope of the resurrection, when God brings the ACC back to himself in his time and in his way. Powerless in death, they nevertheless will endeavor to remain faithful and provide a Gospel witness in the meantime. Some will have the conviction that the liberal Church will collapse under its own weight into complete dysfunction, come to its senses, and re-establish its foundations in a new Reformation. They will hope to be there as midwives to assist in the rebirth.

As for conservative laypeople remaining in liberal or middle of the road parishes, theirs will be a lonely and often unrewarding life, but one that will enjoy occasional influence at the local level. Some will leave such parishes for other denominations or, if they have the option of a local conservative ACC parish, they could attend there. As for the latter, they will soldier on with their understanding of mission and evangelism, preaching the Gospel and supporting non-ACC mission organizations as they have traditionally done. If the past is any sign of the future, such parishes may even flourish and grow.

Their rectors will be under increasing pressure to conform to National Church priorities and doctrinal changes, especially as any conscience clause protecting them (if they have one) wears thin. Conservative bishops and dioceses will, at least for a time, continue to have a voice at the table but the rest of the Church won't really be even politely listening anymore. They will naturally be moving on to the Church as they re-imagine it.

Speaking of conservative bishops and dioceses, a glance south of the border reveals what their likely fate will be. There the situation is, as usual, further down the road than in Canada, and a bit different in the details. Those conservative bishops and dioceses still remaining in the Episcopal Church are now on notice that every diocese must allow for same-sex marriages

regardless of the position of its bishop. Priests wishing to conduct such a ceremony must only get the approval of another bishop and in so-doing come under his or her jurisdiction at least for the purposes of the service itself. It seems that only Bishop William Love of Albany is prepared to say that no such marriages will be permitted anywhere in his diocese, period.³⁶

- b) THE FUTURE LESS LIKELY: The motion to amend the Marriage Canon does not pass the second vote or is tabled. The impatient liberal portion of the ACC then decides to ignore the fact that the present Canon remains in force, resulting in significant ecclesiastical dysfunction.

If the vote is negative or tabled, a number of liberal dioceses will go ahead with same-sex marriages anyway. Indeed, some are already doing so on the very questionable presumption that the present Marriage Canon does not actually prohibit same-sex marriage. No action has been taken against these dioceses, presumably in the hope that GS will pass the amendment and make any disciplinary proceedings moot.

Their action in the face of a negative vote at GS will no doubt set off a chain-reaction of liberal canonical disobedience from parishes in non-rebellious dioceses who will themselves, against their own bishops, proceed to marry same-sex couples. They will no doubt seek episcopal oversight from those bishops who transgress General Synod. In this they will be following the precedent set in the Episcopal Church where their General Convention has, as we have just seen above, authorized such incursions into the territory of conservative bishops with or without the permission of those bishops.

³⁶ I refer the reader to the courageous and articulate Pastoral Letter of the Rt. Rev. William Love of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany. Based on his traditional understanding of exclusive geographical episcopal jurisdiction, it can be found at <https://albanyepiscopaldiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Pastoral-Letter-Regarding-B012-Nov2018.pdf> Not only does Bishop Love give an excellent summary of the biblical evidence regarding homosexuality, he provides this link to a more detailed and scholarly presentation: <https://albanyepiscopaldiocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Homosexuality-The-Bible-and-the-Anglican-Crisis-Bp-LeMarquand.pdf>

Oddly, this will put conservatives in the unusual position of being, in a sense, those who “stay” and while liberals will be in the equally unusual position of being those who “go”. They will probably not go by means of an official break with the ACC, but rather by ignoring the authority of General Synod and daring it to do something about it. Such open and brazen rejection of the authority of General Synod would throw the denomination into an unprecedented constitutional crisis.

At this point it is impossible to predict or even imagine what the final outcome of this possibility might be. One important factor is that the national establishment of the ACC would be in general sympathy with the bishops and priests who decided to ignore General Synod. As those duty bound to support General Synod and Canon Law, those in authority would find themselves in a very awkward position, to say the least. In the past they have managed to turn a blind eye to bishops and dioceses that were pushing at the boundaries, but with this development, blindness would surely not be an option. All we can say with any assurance is that it will be ugly, not to mention debilitating for the ACC. If ignored too long, it could even lead to its collapse due to its internal self-contradictions. One thing is sure: something will have to give.

The basic units of the Anglican structure, we are told, are the dioceses while the National Church exists at their pleasure. The outlaw dioceses could just go their own way or join together in some way in a temporary unofficial alliance. Or they could themselves do nothing, proceed as they wish with same-sex marriage and see what happens. The conservatives in these dioceses would find themselves alienated from their bishops, resulting in action similar to those we describe in part a) above. On the other hand, liberals in dioceses that did not go outlaw would feel left behind and agitate to do something about that.

It is also likely that the Anglican Communion would weigh in on the subject. Certainly, parts of it (e.g., GAFCON) would react very negatively regarding the outlaw dioceses. Unless the National Church did something to disassociate itself from them (unlikely!), it would no doubt at least come under the same sort of sanctions applied to the Episcopal Church. It is unclear what the

Communion will do when the Americans and Canadians refuse to backtrack, but the ultimate sanction is to deny them membership in the Communion while admitting ACNA as a full Province.

In other words, all in all, it will be a mess.

- c) THE FUTURE LEAST LIKELY: The ecclesiastical dysfunction initiated in the above scenario is sufficient to overcome inertia and motivate truly radical structural changes that allow the Church to forge new and more natural groupings of parishes and dioceses.

This “Future” arises out of the realities of the current situation that I have been striving to put before the reader throughout this book. Whatever future belongs to the Anglican Church of Canada will necessarily be profoundly shaped by these facts. There is no way to escape them. To ignore them is to only put the Church in even greater peril. I assemble them here preliminary to suggesting a way forward that, instead, tries to take them fully into account.

SIX APPEAL

1. The Anglican Church of Canada contains two different and incompatible religions, each of which sees the other as in some real sense frustrating its ability to “get on with the job” as it sees it.
2. The upcoming General Synod vote on same-sex marriage and the resultant chaos and paralysis in the denomination will make this division and its nature much more obvious.
3. Neither liberals nor conservatives are going to change their beliefs based on a vote at General Synod. Beliefs are arrived at by other processes altogether.
4. No organization can long survive without a common vision of its fundamental beliefs and mission.

5. The only way to organize a church or any other institution in the first place is to start with bringing together those who see the need for it and share a common vision about how its goals can be met.

To these realities I now add one more that is critical to any possibility of solving the crisis that is facing the ACC:

6. *The present structures of the Church were designed in another era for another kind of Church, one that had a common vision of its fundamental beliefs and mission. These structures must be changed to accommodate the new reality of a fundamentally divided Church.*

By this last point I do not refer to the more superficial structures of the ACC, but rather to its basic shape. The hard truth is that whichever way the vote goes in Vancouver, the Anglican Church of Canada is going to be in for a rough time of it.

However, if the amendment fails, the resultant chaos and dysfunction described in Section b) may provide enough motivation to make the radical structural changes that might keep the denomination together. I use “radical” both in the sense that they go to the root of the problem and that they constitute something very different from what we have at present.

The particular structural component of the Church that is at the heart of our difficulties is that of geographical episcopal jurisdiction. This is the idea that a bishop has exclusive ecclesiastical jurisdiction in a geographical area of the ACC (such as Toronto or Northern Saskatchewan) and no other bishop or clergyperson from another jurisdiction, not even the Primate, can function in that territory without the permission of the diocesan bishop.

The problem is not so much that a bishop has exclusive authority per se, but that it is geographical in nature. *The issue we face is that we are a Church that is divided more fundamentally by what*

we believe than by where we live. At one time it made perfect sense to have one bishop over one area because all the Anglican churches in that area shared a common belief system. This is no longer the case. We still have one bishop but he or she oversees churches made up of people following two conflicting religions. The fault line between the religions runs down the aisle of every parish church, though it runs its jagged course uniquely in every case.

When we come to an issue on which the two religions are adamantly opposed and see as critical to their understanding of the faith, such as we have now with same-sex marriage, the fact that they are all under the one bishop becomes a serious problem. The bishop has to go one way or the other. If she chooses to accept or allow same-sex marriage, she knows she will severely alienate a portion of her flock, and the same will be true if she rejects the new doctrine. Of course, this same dilemma faces every rector in the country because parishes have traditionally been organized strictly along geographical lines as well³⁷.

Admittedly, this “territorial imperative” is the final frontier for many bishops in the sense that they seem to see strictly enforcing this law as the only way to keep the church together. Indeed, it has been weaponized recently in a case that will illustrate the lengths to which some of them will go to protect the idea of territorial authority for themselves and for the Church generally.

I refer here to the case of the Rev. Jacob Worley. In April, 2017, Mr. Worley was elected bishop of Caledonia in northern British Columbia. Before he was elected, Mr. Worley discussed with his Archbishop the fact that, while under the authority of the Province of Rwanda, he had founded a mission within the boundaries of an Episcopal diocese in the U.S. and he had done so without the approval of the local Episcopal bishop. This was clearly against the Anglican tradition of the territorial imperative and Canon Law. At first, he was assured by his Archbishop that because he

³⁷ While traditional parish boundaries are technically still in place, in the ways that matter most they are almost meaningless in the modern era. Most city parishes are composed of many people who cross several parish boundaries to get to the church of their choice. They are attracted by family ties, worship styles, theological positions, sense of community, and even quality of preaching, among other things.

was currently a priest in good standing in Caledonia this episode in his career would not be a hindrance to his being elected bishop. He subsequently was, in fact, elected as the new bishop.

His election, as is normal, had to be approved by the Provincial House of Bishops but they, instead of giving the usually routine go-ahead, in an unprecedented action refused to do so. Mr. Worley was soon after dismissed “without cause”³⁸ from his parish in Caledonia, forcing him and his family to return in difficult circumstances to the United States. The Primate has stated that all this was done “in the best interests of the Church” although he did not explain why he thought so.

And why was such drastic action taken? It was not only because Mr. Worley had crossed jurisdictional lines in his previous ministry, it was stated explicitly that it was done because he continued to believe that doing so was not fundamentally wrong. In other words, he held an opinion that was contrary to Canon Law. Even though he gave assurances to the House of Bishops that he would obey that Canon Law, this was not good enough for his inquisitors. They insisted that he could not even hold an opinion that was contrary to this Canon Law. And they did not have to answer to anyone for their action and Mr. Worley had no right to appeal.

In other words, Mr. Worley was guilty of a “thought crime” that the bishops judged so terrible that he could not serve as a bishop in the ACC. This is in spite of the fact that most of those same bishops themselves hold opinions that are contrary to current Canon Law! As does probably every clergyperson when you get right down to it, if you take Canon Law literally.

But this Canon Law is about jurisdiction. That is my point here. Why did the House of Bishops go to such a self-contradictory extreme? It was not simply because Mr. Worley is a conservative evangelical. After all, they approved as his successor a man who appears to be in that same camp. No, it was obviously something that they felt they had to do in order to preserve the very

³⁸ This usually means that the dismissal is not based on performance of duties but because the employer is no longer in need of the employee's service.

existence of the Church. From this perspective, their unprecedented and surely unjust action only makes sense. It would not do to have a sitting bishop harbouring the idea that it was, even in theory, all right to cross jurisdictional lines without the permission of the local bishop. How could the unity of the church, focused upon the bishop in his territory, his diocese, be maintained if this rule was undermined?

That they did so by the exercise of raw unaccountable power only demonstrates what I have been trying to say in this book: there is no religious unity in the ACC. It cannot be held together by an appeal to, or enforcement of, a shared doctrinal core to which all the clergy must subscribe. In the absence of such, only territorial fundamentalism, enforced by sheer power can in any sense keep the ACC together. *That is, we are a unit because at some point in the past a line was drawn around us on a map that says we are a diocese and from that understanding we cannot be allowed to stray even though the original reason the line could be drawn, a common faith, no longer exists.*

This is Mr. Worley's unforgiveable sin: he refused to believe that the territorial imperative was an essential truth. This is what put him beyond the pale. It was nothing he believes or does not believe about the doctrine of the Church. That is not what got the attention of the B.C. House of Bishops. They know the territorial imperative is all that separates us from utter chaos. No wonder they did what they did! Ironically, it will only be by abandoning this "truth" that we will ever find a way out of the mess we are in.

In our present state of division, the idea of territorial imperative has become problematic, to say the least. This will undoubtedly become all the more obvious after the vote next July, whichever way it goes. The false sense of unity conveyed by the Church being organized into geographically defined units (dioceses) will become clearer to all. And those forces, already underway, which are pushing us away from this anachronism will no doubt be stronger.

It should be noted here that the concept of "flying bishops" already in place in the U.S. (and elsewhere in the case of the ordination of women) is one of those forces. It represents a perhaps

unconscious acknowledgement of the division of the Church into two religions and that the idea of the territorial imperative needs at least some adjustment. Once you allow another bishop to have oversight in your diocese you no longer have territorial integrity in the same sense you had it before. If that involves allowing or accepting another bishop overseeing what you consider an unbiblical, sinful and harmful act, territorial integrity is strained pretty close to the breaking point. Why not just admit it and let it go altogether?

It is probable that whatever happens after GS 2019 will, as usual, erupt in slow motion, but it is in everyone's interest to try to come to terms with the evident division in a more structured and rational manner. Our sickness may be unto death unless radical structural surgery is undertaken. And even then, survival as a whole institution will continue to hang in the balance.

The ACC needs to be reorganized along lines that reflect the reality of its division into two religions. In other words, each religion must be granted its own space in order to breathe freely on its own. At the same time, in order to maintain as much of the unity of the Church as possible, these spaces need to remain connected by sharing in the administration and oversight of whatever national functions and ministries they could honestly and practically support together, including the office of a Primate, the Church in the North and the Pension Plan.

It must be said that what is proposed here is not coming from one with any expertise in the political or legal machinery of the Church, but from one who thinks (imagines?) he sees the big picture and can offer only the barest sketch of what might be done in order to accommodate the difficult realities we face. Hopefully, it may help inspire a common re-imagining of the ACC by others more familiar with the nuts and bolts. The current structures are simply unable to bear up under the current load and will eventually collapse unless changed. Something must be done, and it must have "Six Appeal" in order to work.

It is possible that these conditions could be met by dividing the ACC into two non-geographical Provinces, called "Progressive" and "Conservative", for want of better terms at present. Every

parish would then have to vote on which Province to join, those in the majority retaining the parish corporation and buildings. Those in the minority could decide to stay with the parish or join another that had voted the other way. At the end of the day there could be the same number of parishes in a given area, most of which will probably remain intact. They will lose a minority to the other side but gain a few and perhaps more than a few who found themselves a minority in other parishes. No doubt most parishes will choose to be part of the Progressive province as it would represent the status quo, more or less.

As far as current dioceses are concerned, they could retain their geographical boundaries but with the canonical provision that within its “boundaries” would be a number of parishes that would belong to a non-geographical diocese of the minority Province. That is, bishops would not have exclusive authority over a geographical area, just over those parishes that were part of his or her Province within that area. It might be that another approach would simply (!) invent all new dioceses, each of which would have about the same number of member parishes.

One thing that would make all this more possible is the modern means of communication that are available, making geographical proximity much less necessary. Virtual synods anyone?

Whatever configuration of dioceses emerges from such a process, it is important that some kind of ongoing reconciliation process be part of the way in which the two Provinces relate to one another. Once they are no longer married they may even be able to learn how to live together! Over time it might be possible to work together on more and more aspects of ministry. Perhaps.

Yes, this sketch begs a million questions and although this daunting process would no doubt be messy and painful, the truth, remember, is that doing nothing will be worse and will tie up the Church in knots for years to come and may even destroy it.

Does such a vision of the ACC have even a remote possibility of realization?

I believe that, given the depth and intractability of the current crisis, that there is a small chance that, under God, it will come about. If it does, it may even show a way out of the same divisions that afflict the Church in the rest of the Communion.

It is certainly difficult to rest easy with the conclusion that no matter which way the GS vote goes, serious conflict will characterize the life of the denomination, perhaps to the level of paralysis, as resolution of the mess becomes its overwhelming focus. The losing side, whichever it is, will do as much as it can to have the decision reversed at future General Synods as soon as possible. There is no reason why such an effort would not be attempted, given the extremely close vote we have already seen in the house of clergy in 2016. If it *is* reversed, then there apparently is no canonical reason why it would not be batted back and forth for at least a generation. Of course, those in charge of setting the agenda of future GSs might have something to say about it. What a nightmare!

I trust that enough has been said to demonstrate that my own ruminations, although speculative, are not merely idle. They have in fact been based on a careful reading of the fault lines that are already present and visible to those are willing to look. Once again, I do not maintain that the details will work themselves out exactly as portrayed. No seismologist, ecclesiastical or otherwise, would make any such claim. However, the course of events, will, I believe, generally follow the pattern or patterns that I have outlined. It is difficult to see how they could not, given the realities of the situation both in the Anglican Church of Canada and in the Anglican Communion at the present time.

But the actual eruption, like all real earthquakes, will not be bound by our charts and maps, our neatly assembled facts and figures. It will go its own destructive way and no human being can stay its course.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Let Us Depart in Peace

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 16:18

Throughout this book I have been arguing that the Anglican Church of Canada is made up of two incompatible religions and this fact lies at the heart of our current crisis. While I really do believe that this is essentially true, I must admit that I have deliberately put this incompatibility in the starkest possible terms in order to make my point.

Many, no doubt, will be offended by my characterization of each side as a separate religion. While this is no doubt shocking to some, I believe there is no other adequate way of putting the enormous divide that has opened up in the Church. It saddens me to have to say it this way and I wish I could do otherwise.

Some will believe that I am being wildly extreme because they do not see the ACC the same way. Part of my goal is to challenge those who think like this to wrestle with what I have said. I believe that the evidence I have presented makes a compelling case that I am correct. If you are angry with what I have said, I think that will partly prove my point about how deep our division really is. And if you are angry, please channel that anger into a thoughtful counter-argument in order to convince me and others like me that we are wrong and that the Church is fundamentally unified and not in mortal danger. Nothing would please me more.

It is certainly true that at a casual glance the Church does not seem to be as divided as I make it out to be. That is partly because the conservative/liberal divide I have been labouring to describe is obscured by the very human truth that each one of us, myself included, fails to follow her or his convictions in a consistent manner. That is, there are few, if any, pure conservatives or pure liberals among us. Individual adherents of each side have been influenced by the other to a greater or lesser extent. I refer the reader to my earlier discussion on this point.³⁹

However, I hope I have said enough to warrant a serious consideration of my thesis that two religions divide the Anglican Church of Canada and that its present structure is incapable of keeping them (however we might prefer to characterize its divisions) happily together. If at all true, then surely we need to pay attention to any and all signs pointing in the right direction. Please God, this little book be one of them.

If the amendment to the Marriage Canon succeeds, the scenario in Section a) will unfold basically as described. Eventually this will result in a Church much diminished by the effective loss of its conservative wing. The victorious liberal establishment will simply continue to see things in its own way and naturally act in its own self-interest, rolling over any residual opposition to its agenda. It will have little motivation to accommodate other points of view, especially if it means making the necessary radical structural changes suggested above. It will simply not see the need.

If the amendment to the Marriage Canon fails, the scenario in section b) of the last chapter will unfold. Although this result will be much more traumatic in the short run, it bears the only realistic hope that I can see for the denomination to embrace both of its religions in a way that allows each to find a way to thrive and find ways to work effectively together. And even, perhaps, come better to understand one another and thus pave the way to fuller reconciliation. Who

³⁹ See above, p. 97f.

knows, it might even show the way forward through the same crisis which is afflicting other parts of the Anglican Communion.

I ended the last chapter on a rather apocalyptic note. I do not apologize for this but rather hope that it might encourage us to remember, as all good apocalypticists do, that God is in control of history. Please pray for GS 2019 that his will might be done.

At this point it is important to remind ourselves that the ACC is only a small portion of the church universal and even if it should cease to exist in its current form, that is not the end of the church itself. In fact, it would not even be the end of the historic Anglican presence in the Canadian landscape. The authentic Anglican Way will still survive within the ACC⁴⁰, in ANiC, and in other continuing Anglican Churches. And in the worldwide Anglican Communion, which is thriving in many places. For those of us who consider this to be the best Way, “There is Hope”, as my old friend Stan Izon put it so long ago.

All of us go down to the dust;
Yet even at the grave we make our song:
Alleluiah! Alleluiah! Alleluiah!

Our God reigns!
In the name of the Lord, Amen.

⁴⁰ I strongly commend the good work to this end of the Anglican Communion Alliance. You can find them at the following address: <https://anglicancommunionalliance.ca>